PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 97

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1985-86

COMPRISING PERIOD
6 MAY—16 MAY 1986

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IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 97**

TWELFTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1985-86

House of Commons

Tuesday 6 May 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GULL ISLAND PROTECTION BILL *[Lords]*

As amended, considered.
Amendment agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

IPSWICH PORT AUTHORITY BILL

As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higher Education

1. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had in the last month with the National Advisory Body and the University Grants Committee about the future development of higher education.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. George Walden): My right hon. Friend has written one letter jointly to the chairmen of the University Grants Committee, National Advisory Body and the Welsh Advisory Body about student numbers in 1987-88. He is meeting the chairman of the UGC tomorrow, Wednesday 7 May.

Mr. Bennett: When the Secretary of State meets the chairman of the UGC, perhaps he will come up with the farewell message that cuts in higher education are off. Will the Government stop hiding behing the UGC and NAB planning exercise, come clean and make it clear that they are demanding cuts in the number of students going into higher education or in the resources per student? Why is Britain the only country that is cutting higher education? If we want an economic future, we should surely be investing in, not cutting, higher education

Mr. Walden: It is grossly irresponsible of the hon. Gentleman to stir up unjustified alarm among students, parents and institutions about access to higher education. The Government have been enormously successful in expanding access to higher education, and it is not our policy to curtail it now.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: When my right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the UGC, will he seek his assurance that there is no question mark over the future of Stirling university? Will he also put it to him that there should be a question mark over the UGG, and that it would be far better to allocate funds to universities and colleges of higher education on the basis of student demand, with resoures allocated according to student preference rather than by bureaucratic methods?

Mr. Walden: My hon Friends asks a complicated question. I know that the UGC is concerned about financial trends. However, there have been no formal recommendations to the Government about closures, and the Government are monitoring closely any evidence of financial difficulty.

Mr. Freud: Does the Minister accept that there is a subsequential question mark over his Department's competence in dealing with higher education? Will he reverse the trend of trying to cram ever more students into polytechnics without making adequate provision for their funding?

Mr. Walden: I am sorry to hear the hon. Gentleman speak in that derogatory way about the success of public sector higher education in accommodating many new students. To be precise, there has been an increase of one

third in the student population. I am sorry that he should take such a primitive economic attitude and believe that the success of the public sector in efficiently accommodating many new students is not a matter on which it should be congratulated.

Mr. Stokes: Is my hon. Friend aware that the cuts proposed in the courses run by the Stourbridge college of art and technology, which is pre-eminent in the glass industry throughout the country, have caused alarm and despondency in my constituency? I look to the Government to put the matter right.

Mr. Walden: I hope that my hon. Friend will look carefully at the source of any speculation about cuts. I imagine he will find that, as is so often the case, that source is not the Government.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: As I have no wish to be irresponsible or complicated, how should I reply to those in Leeds who write to tell me that the fine arts department at Leeds polytechnic is being considered for closure? Should I write and tell them that no such possiblity arises?

Mr. Walden: The right hon. Gentleman should ask his colleagues at Leeds polytechnic carefully to reread the letter that they received from the secretariat of the National Advisory Body. I believe that that was the source of the rumours. His colleagues will then note that the proposals in that letter are not endorsed by the Government.

Mr. Squire: Has my hon. Friend had an opportunity today to read the devastating indictment of Opposition policies set out in the Opposition's house newspaper, *The Guardian*, by Hugo Young? If so, does he agree that it exposes the emptiness of the Opposition's promises on higher education, as on so many other issues?

Mr. Walden: My hon. Friend has made an extremely good point. In higher education one is dealing with a rather highly educated class of person. I do not for one moment believe that such a person will be impressed by the Opposition scattering Mickey Mouse money in front of him for higher education, just as they have scattered it in front of every other topic debated in the Chamber.

3. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had in the last month from the higher education unions about the number of students entering higher education in 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: None, Sir.

Mr. Dubs: Does the Minister agree that there is great uncertainty and anxiety about the future of higher education in this country, which has been directly caused by the Government's attempt to cut the number of resources going to all categories of higher education? Is it not time that the Government realised that Britain's future depends on the skill, training and education of our people? Why do the Government say that they must cut higher education? Such cuts would damage the country's future.

Mr. Walden: I am intrigued that the hon. Gentleman should complain about uncertainty in higher education and at the same time deliberately fuel it by referring to non-existent plans for cuts. I wish that he and other Opposition Members would stop doing down Britain's achievements by making international comparisons. They are a notorious minefield, and Opposition Members frequently step on rather obvious mines. The hon. Gentleman alluded to international comparisons, but the best bases for them are degrees and higher level diplomas. On that basis, the United Kingdom is on a par with West Germany and above others in western Europe.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: If and when my hon. Friend receives any representations from the higher education authorities, will he bear in mind that many of the numbers will represent people who may not even be properly qualified to go to university? Does he agree that those who have the privilege of going on to further education and who have the best grants in Europe available to them should aim to have a career to go to at the end of their three years of study? It is a privilege to go on to further education, and someone has to pick up the tab for that.

Mr. Walden: My hon. Friend has made many worthy points, and he will not expect us to dissent from them. I refer, in particular, to the notion that the vocational element of higher education should be stressed.

Mr. Radice: Will there be any cuts in 1987-88 in the number of resources going into higher education?

Mr. Walden: In the normal way, decisions on the funds that will be allocated to the public sector for higher education are calculated in the routine way, at the time when funds going to local authorities are calculated.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

4. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about pay and conditions of service for teachers.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): Talks covering both pay and conditions of service continue at ACAS between the management side and the five unions which signed the ACAS agreement in January. The National Union of Teachers has excluded itself from the talks by refusing to abide by the agreement and end its disruption of schools. The National Union of Teachers has requisitioned a meeting of the Burnham primary and secondary committee for this Friday, 9 May.

Mr. Greenway: Is it not a tragedy that the National Union of Teachers, which represents 48 per cent. of teachers, is excluded from the talks, when ever-increasing numbers of parents are voting with their feet by transferring their children from state to independent schools? Would it not be in the best interests of children, parents and teachers if the NUT ended its disruptive action and took its proper place at the conference table?

Sir Keith Joseph: The National Union of Teachers could return to the talks quite easily by ending disruption and abiding by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service agreement. I wish that it would do so.

Mr. Dormand: Is the Secretary of State aware that teachers are voting with their feet by leaving the other unions and joining the NUT? That is a fact. Will the right hon. Gentleman make it clear that many of the activities which are carried out by all teachers of all unions, such as after-school club activities, Saturday morning sports games and activities outside lunchtime supervision, cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be held to be other than voluntary? Will the right hon. Gentleman also

give an assurance that those duties will not be taken into consideration when trying to lay down the law and attaching them to salaries?

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman should be wary before announcing exactly the flow of teachers to union membership. The duties of teachers have long included activities outside the classroom. It is the definition of duties that is being sought by the five teacher unions and the local education authorities under the ACAS umbrella.

Mr. Sayeed: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one cannot say what a job is worth unless one says what it entails?

Sir Keith Joseph: It is precisely for that reason that the Government regard the definition of duties, as well as the definition of pay and career structure, as important. That is why we are glad that the ACAS negotiations are taking place.

Mr. Flannery: Have not the ACAS talks, which are a democratic interchange of opinion, always taken place when there are honest differences? However, on this occasion the employers laid down conditions before the talks began. They said that unless the NUT agreed with certain things, they would not sit down in the same room and talk. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that we cannot continue to organise the education of our children without the help and agreement of the NUT, which represents half the teaching force in this country?

Sir Keith Joseph: The NUT should consider the interests of children. It professes to be concerned about education, yet it promotes the disruption of the educational process. The NUT has urged its members to refuse to carry out activities which have long been recognised as part of a teacher's work. I support the view of the local authority employers that the NUT should return to the talks only if it ends the disruption.

Mr. Lyell: Would not a large number of teachers, including many members of the NUT, welcome a proper contract, fair assessment and the improved job and career opportunities that would follow? What does the NUT hope to gain by its continued obstruction?

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. and learned Friend's proposition is entirely correct. I cannot be expected to defend the National Union of Teachers' behaviour.

Mr. Radice: As this is almost certainly the right hon. Gentleman's last Question Time as Secretary of State for Education and Science, it is a pity that we cannot say farewell on a happier note. Does he accept the judgment of the Tory candidate in the Ryedale by-election that there is a wide gap between the intentions of the right hon. Gentleman and what he has managed to achieve, so much so that our schools are now in a worse state than they were in 1981 when he took over as Secretary of State for Education and Science?

Sir Keith Joseph: I accept that last year was a miserable year for education. Will the hon. Gentleman answer a question from me?—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Very well.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not stop the Secretary of State. I did not know what he was going to say.

Mr. Forth: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he and the Government are still concerned, above all, with quality in education? Will he also confirm that he gives the highest priority to introducing a system of assessment of teacher performance, so that those who do well in the classroom are duly rewarded and those who do less well are encouraged to improve their performance?

Sir Keith Joseph: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The Government's objective is to raise standards and, for that reason, to offer teachers much more effective in-service training, coupled with appraisal.

Nursery Education

5. **Mr. Soley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received on the availability of nursery education.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): No such representations have been received.

Mr. Soley: How does the hon. Gentleman expect the United Kingdom to keep up with its industrial competitors if we perform so badly in nursery education? Should not such education be given a much higher priority by the Government and by the country generally? Is it not a fact that without that nursery education and some measure of performance by the Government we shall be found wanting in the future?

Mr. Dunn: It is for local education authorities to determine the nature and scale of provision offered at that level. The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that in 1979 428,000 children were in nursery schools and nursery classes. By 1985 that figure had increased by 80,000—almost 20 per cent.

Mr. Haselhurst: Before encouraging the commitment of yet greater resources to nursery education, will my hon. Friend consider how the role to be played by the pre-school play group movement might be enhanced by closer co-operation with the junior schools to which the children might proceed?

Mr. Dunn: I welcome the growth of the voluntary sector, voluntary organisations and self-help groups. I notice that the Labour party in its recent commitment made no reference to the role of voluntary groups. Its proposals for making nursery school places free on demand to three-year-olds and four-year-olds would cost the United Kingdom more than £400 million in the first year and more than £300 million thereafter. What a cost!

Mr. Dobson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the importance that the Government attach to pre-school education is shown by the fact that they changed the law to make it clear that local education authorities were not obliged to provide pre-school education?

Mr. Dunn: Local authorities have power, but not a duty, to provide nursery education. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that in 1985 43 per cent. of three-year-olds and four-year-olds were in nursery schools or in nursery classes, compared with only 37 per cent. in 1979.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend tell the pampered actress whom the Labour party put on the television screen yesterday as a decoy for Bernie Grant and Mr. Hatton that there is no such thing as free nursery education, that it must be paid for by the ratepayer and taxpayer, and that

many people feel that the mothers of three-year-olds and four-year-olds would be better advised to look after their own children than try to offload them on to the state?

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that I came to the same conclusion. The lady who appeared last night on the party political broadcast talked about nursery education as a basic right, but she did not want to talk about parental responsibility for bringing up very young children at home.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman check some of the facts that he has given to the House? Does he agree with the Prime Minister that nursery education is important? Does he agree that since 1979 the Government have been closing nursery schools, that in the past three years there has been virtually no expansion in provision in nursery schools or nursery classes and that, over the next two years, fewer children will enjoy nursery schools and nursery classes than have done in the past? Does the hon. Gentleman also agree that, by the year 2000, at the present rate of progress, our provision for three-year-olds and four-year-olds will still be only half that in West Germany, France, Holland, and Italy?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman is right in one respect. Since 1979, 32 nursery schools have closed. However, the general increases, which I mentioned earlier, are to be welcomed. The Opposition parties make no reference to the role of the voluntary sector, and that is most lamentable.

Schools (Homework)

7. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive the report from Her Majesty's inspectors' survey of good practice in schools in relation to homework; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Chris Patten): My right hon. Friend hopes to receive this report during the summer.

Mr. Madel: As part of the policy of raising standards in the classroom, at what age do the Government think that homework should be compulsory for children? Do the Government accept that arrangements should be made for some children to do their homework at school at the end of the day if conditions at home are difficult?

Mr. Patten: I agree that where facilities are made available for doing homework at school, they are most welcome. I hope that Her Majesty's inspectors' survey will offer some useful evidence of current practices which will enable us to answer my hon. Friend's first question. I would point to the important role of parents in helping younger children especially with reading at home.

School Governors

8. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the provision in the Education Bill to prohibit the appointment of school governors under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has received nine letters, including five from hon. Members, opposing the proposal. In addition, the matter has been discussed during debates on the Bill in another place.

Mr. Wainwright: Is the Minister aware that some local education authorities already include pupils under the age of 18 among their appointments to governorships? Does he not realise that a minority of pupils as school governors would further the consumer-based society that the Government claim to champion?

Mr. Dunn: The Government have long held the view that a school or college governor holds an office of public and pecuniary trust. Minors are not eligible to hold such office. We are aware that there are contrary legal views, and that is why we are seeking to put the matter beyond doubt, especially in the light of the wider responsibilities now proposed for governing bodies.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Is it true, as the *Daily Mail* stated in an education article today, that it can cost more for a child to be educated in the public secondary sector than through a private school? If so, does that not suggest that the financial management of our schools leaves much to be desired? If that is the case, what is the point of governors who lack either financial or management skills having a say in how our schools are controlled?

Mr. Dunn: We shall have the opportunity to discuss those matters when the Bill comes here from another place. It is fair to point out to the House that we intend to legislate for a degree of financial management in schools and to embark on and create training courses for governors so that they will know why they are appointed.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

9. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past month from the teachers' unions about the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education examination.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend has expressed to all the teachers' associations his willingness to receive any further and detailed comments they may have about the preparation for and funding of the introduction of the GCSE. The Department stands ready to consider these matters further.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that nearly six weeks ago I sent a letter from a worried parent, Mr. Beal of New Houghton in my constituency, to the Secretary of State for Education and Science? The letter says that he is concerned about the examination going through. I have not yet had a reply from this deadbeat Secretary of State or the junior Minister who is trying to get his job. Is it not a scandal that the Minister cannot reply to my constituent in six weeks and at the same time is trying to tell parents and teachers to rush through this tinpot examination? Why does the Secretary of State not make way for somebody else?

Mr. Patten: I am grateful for that balanced contribution. I assure the hon. Gentleman that, in the light of his question, I shall see that his constituent receives an early reply. I am equally sure that the hon. Gentleman will want to reassure his constituent about the importance of this examination being introduced smoothly in September.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the GCSE was demanded by teachers' unions, that it has been most thoroughly researched and prepared, and that £30

million has been made available by the Government, in addition to the sums provided by local authorities? Does he agree that the new examination will do a great deal to improve the quality of education in our schools?

Mr. Patten: I could not have put it better myself.

Mr. Freud: Will the Minister confirm that a substantial sum of money is being granted to north Yorkshire, and Ryedale in particular, for the GCSE? If that is true, will he do his best to let counties that are not having by-elections have similar grants?

Mr. Patten: Thanks to the education support grant, all local education authorities will be able to add to the capitation which, doubtless, they are making available for the introduction of the GCSE. That is what the £20 million is for — for all local education authorities. Unfortunately, some local education authorities do not have quite as much as they might like for that purpose. For example, Derbyshire, is spending £60,000 on overprinting all its stationery with the news that Derbyshire is a nuclear-free zone.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Is my hon. Friend aware that the teachers' unions—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is my hon. Friend aware——

Mr. Skinner: We've got the muesli vote in west Derbyshire.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has had one question. He cannot keep interrupting other people's questions.

Mr. Baker: Is my hon. Friend aware that the teachers' unions are putting forward figures for the cost of the GCSE and the time that its introduction will take which are very much in excess of the figures and the time that his Department has produced? Will he quickly examine those figures and refute them, because everyone wants to see this important examination introduced?

Mr. Patten: I shall certainly ensure that we continue to put sensible figures into play. The fact is that there has been a good deal of exaggeration. There is a tendency for some teachers to pile all their ambitions into an argument about resources for the GCSE. Nevertheless, we want to have serious discussions with the teachers' associations about the resources for this most important examination.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Minister aware of the situation that is faced by some of the heads in schools in my constituency where, out of a possible 97 syllabuses, only 27 have been received so far? The syllabuses that are being submitted need to be amended in many ways. Therefore, the teachers are having to draw up programmes only weeks before the introduction of the GCSE. Will the Minister take his head out of the sand and realise that there will be great difficulties in the introduction of the GCSE?

Mr. Patten: The arrangements for the introduction of syllabuses are exactly as they were when we first discussed that issue a couple of years ago. Over 235 syllabuses have now been approved. They are being mailed daily to schools. The arrangements for the approval of syllabuses are entirely on course.

Mr. Forth: Will my hon. Friend confirm that it was the teachers' unions that demanded this examination in the first place? What conclusions has my hon. Friend drawn as to the reason for the change of attitude now shown by the unions?

Mr. Patten: I still believe that the overwhelming majority of good and professional teachers want to see the examination introduced smoothly. Unfortunately, one or two people have been trying to use it as part of their pay dispute, but I hope that that will not apply to all teachers.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister tell us how his talks with the National Union of Teachers are going? Does he not accept that he has a short time to win public acceptance — the acceptance of parents, pupils and teachers—for the new examination? If the Government showed a little urgency and gave a little extra in resources, that good will could be won. What are the Government doing to achieve that?

Mr. Patten: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have been talking about the examination for the best part of 15 years. We only recently announced increased resources and training. But we are still talking to the teachers' associations. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has met the NUT, and the Department's officials are talking to some of the NUT's officials at the moment. I hope that it will be possible to persuade them to take part fully in making the examination the success that it deserves to be.

Education (Politicisation)

10. **Mr. Couchman** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be able to make an announcement of the conclusion of his consideration whether an inquiry should be held into the politicisation of education.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government's decision will be announced as soon as possible in the light of all the views expressed about measures to be taken against indoctrination, including those in another place about the possibility of legislation in the Education Bill.

Mr. Couchman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. He might like to know that in my constituency the headmistress of Rainham girls' school invited the three main parties to offer people to speak to her sixth form pupils. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is a better way for pupils to be exposed to political views and policies? Will he issue a circular suggesting to other head teachers that that is a good way to go about such matters?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree with my hon. Friend. I think that that method is widely practised.

Mr. Key: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is thoroughly bad luck that my question is No. 56 on the Order Paper? The point that I would have raised in my question is that much claptrap is talked on both sides of the House about the politicisation of education. The problem is that it is not being done properly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) said. More resources should be directed to teaching politics in schools.

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend must realise that, outside the direct teaching of politics, a small minority of teachers introduce politicisation and indoctrination into

lessons. Many parents are, alas, deterred from making complaints, but no responsible holder of my office should ignore the widespread anxiety about possible indoctrination.

Departmental Budget

11. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the science part of his Department's budget.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have received 230 representations, all urging more public spending on basic scientific research.

Mr. Soames: In view of the increasingly unsatisfactory way in which the Government administer the science budget, does my right hon. Friend agree that there should be a Minister in his Department whose sole responsibility it would be to pull together all the strands of the science budget in the Government's spending programme?

Sir Keith Joseph: If my hon. Friend's suggestion would mean an improvement, it would deserve careful consideration. The Government delegate to the research councils and the universities the decisions about how to spend the allocation of taxpayers' money. That is a continuing process. We do not need a Minister especially devoted to science to achieve that.

Mr. Pavitt: When did the Secretary of State last discuss this matter with the chairman of the Medical Research Council? In view of its latest report, is he aware that problems have arisen because of short funding of the clinical research centre at Northwick Park hospital, which is funded jointly by the Medical Research Council and the North-West Thames board?

Sir Keith Joseph: I would see the chairman of any research council who asked to see me. Normally, I receive advice through the chairman of the Advisory Board on the Research Councils. There has been almost an explosion of research possibilities in almost every area. It would be almost impossible for any Government to fund the complete implementation of them all.

Dr. Bray: Is the Secretary of State aware that, increasingly, many industrialists, including the newly appointed science adviser to the Cabinet Office, Mr. John Fairclough, have said that the tightness of funding on basic science and the cut in university science are gravely undermining our science base and that the diversion into applied research is selling out Britain for the long term?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am aware of the widespread sense of dissatisfaction, but the hon. Gentleman must accept that one difference between us and our neighbours in north-west Europe is that industry here contributes far less than it does in neighbouring countries to scientific research. That is another factor that must be borne in mind.

Primary Schools

13. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what targets his Department has issued for primary school pupil places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Targets were promulgated in the 1986 public expenditure White Paper for the removal of surplus places by 1991 in schools of all types. The targets are not broken down by type of school, but incorporate an assumption that local education authorities will be able to remove half of the national surplus of primary school places.

Mr. Freud: Why does the Minister's Department take so much less heed of the rising number in the primary sector than of the falling number in the secondary sector of education? Does he accept that this will be an end to the rising-fives, which for many children is the only provision, educationally, that is available?

Mr. Dunn: Proposals for the closure or amalgamation of any schools are matters for local education authorities. Those proposals come before the Secretary of State by one route or another and, in the light of representations made, the Secretary of State makes a decision. In the context of the hon. Gentleman's question, local authorities must take account of the growth or decline in the school population in the area served by the school.

Education Committees

14. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the position of co-opted members of local authorities' education committees.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend continues to pursue the policy set out in circular 8/73.

Mr. Atkinson: I recognise the constructive contribution that the co-opted representatives of the teaching profession make to education authorities. Is my hon. Friend aware of the growing concern at their right to vote without accountability to their electorate, particularly in those hung authorities where they hold the balance of power? Will he draw these matters to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State as soon as possible?

Mr. Dunn: Any abuse of any system will inevitably bring that system into disrepute. Those who are overstepping their terms of reference should contemplate further their action because, without doubt, they are bringing the system into disrepute. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend's question.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

15. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement about progress with his plans for the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education examination.

Mr. Chris Patten: The programme of preparation for the GCSE is thorough and of high quality. Never before has so much been done to prepare all teachers for an examination reform. The measures announced by my right hon. Friend on 13 March are designed to ensure the successful completion of the training programme and to allow authorities to fund a real increase in spending on books and equipment for the GCSE. I hope that all teachers will seize the opportunities now available to make the GCSE the success which they, as much as we, know it can be and should be.

Mr. Colvin: I thank my hon. Friend for that comprehensive reply. If it is true, as some teachers are

suggesting, that there is a shortage of time for training them in the new syllabuses for the GCSE, could they not come back from their summer holidays a couple of weeks earlier?

Mr. Patten: We have provided for a couple of days of training during the summer term, which should help a great deal. Phase four training will be particularly important, and I hope that teachers will play a full part in that as well as in phase three.

Mr. Dormand: Does the Minister recall that, when he opened a recent debate on this subject, he said that it was probably the greatest innovation in the history of education, or words to that effect? In those circumstances, is he not taking the greatest possible risk in setting in train these matters when he knows, and his knowledge has been reflected in his answers so far today, that he does not yet have the full co-operation of teachers? Will he listen to what they are saying?

Mr. Patten: This is a considerable innovation, which is why we are putting considerable resources into it. I hope that we shall be able to introduce it with the full consent of the overwhelming majority of teachers, but it is possible to make too much of the difference between what is going on in schools where there are good curricular practices, and what will happen when the GCSE is introduced.

Further Education

16. Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the total number of students in higher and further education; and how this compares with previous years.

Mr. Walden: The numbers of students have been increasing and in higher education are now at their highest ever level. I have arranged for the detailed figures since 1979 to be published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Chapman: Will my hon. Friend confirm, more specifically, that the number of full-time students in higher and further education has increased by over 13 per cent. in the past six years, and that that, in spite of much misleading propaganda, is a trend worthy of commendation rather than condemnation?

Mr. Walden: I am glad to have this chance to put the record straight, following earlier exchanges. The numbers of students in higher education since the Government came into office in 1979 are 80,000 up. The proportion of 18 and 19-year-olds entering higher education is 15 per cent. up and the numbers of mature students — an important category — are 12 per cent. up. If those are cuts, they sound very kind cuts to me.

Following are the figures:

Students in Higher and Further Education

Thousands

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	**1985*
Higher education* (Great Britain)							
Full-time and sandwich	510	521	542	553	566	573	579
Part-time†	268	288	297	303	312	312	328
Non-advanced further education (England)							
Full-time and sandwich‡	288	296	328	355	344	337	338
Part-time	1,151	1,125	1,057	1,064	1,151	1,191	1,316

* Universities and public sector higher education. Provisional.
† Including the Open University.
‡ Home and overseas students.

School Books

17. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Educational Publishers Association on the provision of books in schools.

21. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received on the provision of books in schools.

Mr. Chris Patten: During 1985 the Educational Publishers Association made representations to the Department about the level of expenditure on school books, and in particular the provision of books for the GCSE. I also had a meeting with it last February at which these issues were discussed. In addition, Ministers have received a number of letters from members of the public about the level of expenditure on school books.

Mr. Banks: How can the Minister defend a 28·4 per cent. cut in real terms in book expenditure in the past five years? Is he aware that in the London borough of Richmond, controlled by the Liberal party, there has been a reduction in the past year of 77 per cent. in book spending in secondary schools? Does he not agree that if Londoners are interested in the welfare and education standards of their children they should vote Labour in the local elections on Thursday?

Mr. Patten: Life is difficult enough without trying to explain the Liberal party to the hon. Gentleman, but I do not agree with his figures. Under this Government spending per pupil on books and equipment has gone up by 8 per cent. for primary schoolchildren and by 5 per cent. for secondary schoolchildren. Expenditure on books and equipment per pupil fell by 7·3 per cent. in real terms between 1975 and 1979.

Mr. Barron: Does the Minister's answer take into account last year's HMI report on books in schools, which said that one third of schools were under-provided with books?

Mr. Patten: What the HMI report actually said was that poor management and inadequate identification of needs were a more common cause of the shortage of books and equipment than low capitation.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her offical engagements for Tuesday 6 May.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I have beeen asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is attending the economic summit in Tokyo.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Can the Leader of the House reassure my constituents about radiation fallout? What is the size of the unit monitoring the effect on food and beverages? Is the evidence readily available? Are imported food and vegetables being monitored?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure the hon. Lady will have all those points comprehensively and satisfactorily answered when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment makes a statement on the matter later this afternoon.

Mr. Sackville: Does my right hon. Friend agree that events at Wapping at the weekend were utterly disgraceful and that we now know that the real policy of the Labour party is to condone mob violence and attacks on the police?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes an extremely pertinent point. The evidence was available for all who watched their television screens. Those scenes at Wapping were not only a shameful travesty of the true traditions of trade unionism, but underline how wise we are to have proceeded with trade union reform.

Mr. Kinnock: The hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) has raised a question which requires a response. The Labour party does not condone violence of any description by mobs or individuals in any circumstances.

Does the right hon. Gentleman share my concern about the lack of clarity in the information relating to the measurement of increased radioactivity in parts of Britain? Will he give an undertaking that the relevant Departments will today produce figures of the levels of radioactivity that they are candid and accurate and that they will be published in a form that can be clearly understood by the general public?

Mr. Biffen: As to the first point, of course I realise that the right hon. Gentleman, with total integrity, condemns the kind of violence outside Wapping at the weekend that was shown on our television screens. Whatever may have been said in the heat of the moment by others of his party, certainly I acquit him of having in any sense condoned what occurred. It was for that reason that I deliberately used the word "travesty". None the less, what happened at Wapping is a reminder of what can happen once those who stand behind trade unionism and who wish to manipulate it get out of hand and gain control.

On the point that the right hon. Gentleman made in respect of the measurement of radiation, as he will know, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be making a statement this afternoon. It will touch specifically upon measurement and the extent to which there is verifiable satisfaction that the matter is well within safe limits of tolerance. It would be a greater courtesy to the House if it was to get that information from my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Kinnock: I know that there will be a further statement, but there is an important issue. The right hon. Gentleman is answering for the Prime Minister, so may I put this point to him? Does he agree with Mr. Eddie Ryder, the Government's chief nuclear inspector, that after Chernobyl there will have to be a pause before any further decisions are taken about the future of nuclear power in Britain?

Mr. Biffen: I would have thought that in the whole development of nuclear power—and this will be attested to by those who work, and work for a proud tradition, in that industry in the United Kingdom—we have never hurried these matters.

Mr. Couchman: If my right hon. Friend is in touch with the Prime Minister in the course of the day, will he pass to her congratulations on the successful outcome of the talks in Japan, the reports on which seem to be very favourable indeed?

Mr. Biffen: I believe that my hon. Friend speaks for both Government and Opposition Members in applauding the successes that have been scored at the economic summit at Tokyo. I shall ensure that the message goes to the Prime Minister. The House will have a chance to learn direct from her on Thursday, when she will be making a statement.

Mr. Benn: Reverting to the events at Wapping on Saturday night and Sunday morning, does the Leader of the House recall that similar language was used about Orgreave and that every miner charged with riot was acquitted? Does he recall that the police video showed that six cavalry charges occurred before a single stone was thrown and that four hon. Members, including myself, who were present on that night saw a succession of baton charges by the police against innocent people? Will the Home Secretary make a statement so that he can be held to account for the action of the police on Saturday night?

Mr. Biffen: I have to say to the right hon. Gentleman —and as he was there he might perhaps have reflected before making the statement that he has just made——

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: The right hon. Gentleman was not there.

Mr. Biffen: No, of course I was not. One hundred and seventy police were injured at Wapping on that evening and the wounds were not self-inflicted. If the House, like the nation, is to have any sense of balance about these matters, it will know that the police were acting under the most severe circumstances. I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman could not have used the same language as the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Sayeed: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the consequences of the nuclear disaster in Soviet Russia has been to show that the Soviet authorities are keener to save face than to look after their own people?

Mr. Biffen: There are many lessons to be learnt from the whole of that episode, one of which is the great dangers that attend an enclosed society that has nuclear power and a nuclear accident of this nature occurs. The way that we are reacting to it in the West — and that will be

underlined by the statement later this afternoon — demonstrates that our main concern is to secure public confidence, which can be achieved only by a proper system of disclosure.

Q2. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 May 1985.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wallace: Bearing in mind what the Leader of the House has said about the need for proper public disclosure in the nuclear industry, and bearing in mind also that the minor explosion at Dungeness was kept quiet for a number of weeks and that my constituents have had a considerable job trying to prise any information out of the Atomic Energy Authority in preparing a case against the Dounreay expansion, has the time not come for us to review the whole ethos of secrecy that pervades the British nuclear industry? Should we not make a start by abolishing the Official Secrets Act?

Mr. Biffen: On the specific point about Dungeness, there has been no safety factor involved in that which has any relationship whatever to nuclear power, and the hon. Gentleman's implication is wholly unfounded. I dare say that quite soon we shall be able to arrange for a debate on nuclear power and, although I have no wish to usurp the authority of the Chair, I hope that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and himself will both be called so that we can hear their sharply contrasting views on the subject.

Mrs. Currie: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members represent coal miners and those who work in coal-fired power stations, particularly in Derbyshire, the smoke from which has been accused at most of damaging the health of a few trees? Therefore, will he encourage those Ministers concerned to ensure that we can look to the refurbishment and redevelopment of those power stations to help provide the energy needs of the future?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly carry out that request.

Q3. **Mr. Austin Mitchell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 May.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mitchell: When the Prime Minister recommended her economic policies as appropriate for adoption by the other Heads of State at the Tokyo summit, the economies of nearly every one of which has higher current and prospective growth, higher productivity and investment, plus lower unemployment, interest rates and inflation, can the Leader of the House tell us whether anyone laughed?

Mr. Biffen: No, but if the hon. Gentleman wants to play his contribution for laughs, I am sure that there is a by-election electorate which wants to consider Britain's achievement in terms of output, exports, falling interest rates and falling levels of inflation, and to contrast that with the policies essayed by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), sustained by the leader of the Liberal party, which resulted in the debacle of Labour's defeat in 1979.

Mr. Beith: Does the Leader of the House recognise the profound impact that the Soviet nuclear explosion has had on British public opinion, leading people to recognise just how enormous the consequences of such an accident will be, however unlikely? Has he forgotten his own days as a nuclear rebel, when he voted with us and against the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) when he sought to expand Windscale?

Mr. Biffen: It is just possible that the sight of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) caused me to scurry into the Lobby alongside the hon. Gentleman, but that episode demonstrates that I have always been open-minded and even-handed about nuclear power, and one has never needed that more so than now, when certain forces in our society that want to undermine and destroy what benefits nuclear power can bring point to the Russian example to draw exactly the wrong conclusions. What the hon. Gentleman should be saying, I hope that he will be saying it on a future occasion, is how impressed he is by our nuclear industry's safety record and how wise we are to have the kind of planning procedures that attend its development.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is bad enough that over 170 police officers should be attacked and beaten by a mob of Left-wing thugs, but what is infinitely worse is that Labour Members should use the occasion not to condemn lawlessness but to pillory the police? Can any political party that harbours such views seriously be fit for Government?

Mr. Biffen: Enough was seen on television to ensure that those who have taken the stand that they have this afternoon in making an attack upon the police demean themselves much more than they can be demeaned by any words of mine.

Q4. **Mr. Freeson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 May

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Freeson: Has the Leader of the House seen the reports on the Top Salaries Review Body proposals, which will probably lead to an increase of £100 a week for certain top brass in the Army, the Civil Service and judges? Will he give an undertaking now on behalf of the Government that when that report is formally received there will at least be a freeze on any proposals along those lines so that we do not have the obscenity of many people in Britain having to live on about £100 a week while it is proposed that people in certain positions should receive £100 a week on top of the high increases that they received last year?

Mr. Biffen: Yes, I can confirm that I have seen the newspaper reports of the reviews, and it is true that they have now been deposited with the Government. I have not seen those reviews, and I do not know what figures they contain, so I cannot comment upon the right hon. Gentleman's assertion,. but they will be treated in the appropriate prudent and measured way.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to read the Ealing Labour party election manifesto, which proposes the banning of sexist calendars——

Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member's question must relate to the responsibilities of the Leader of the House.

Mr. Greenway: I am asking my right hon. Friend to read that document. The Labour party will double the rates in two years. Would not the electors of Ealing be thoughtless if they voted for Labour on Thursday?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is quite correct to draw attention to that document, which he has otherwise called a treasure-house of absurdity — a masterpiece of understatement. My hon. Friend is wise to draw the attention of the House to the basic nature of the divisions in local authority that affect Londoners and others. People can either vote for a Government of proven experience and success, backed by their supporters, or for the uncertain Labour voices that appear to have only one thing in common, which, is a desire to, spend more public money, either ratepayers' or taxpayers'.

Q5. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 May.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hardy: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that a major reason for the Government's espousal of the pressurised water reactor is that it will confer considerable industrial export opportunities upon Britain? In the light of the Russian experience, does the right hon. Gentleman now agree that the prospect of such orders should be viewed with much greater caution? Does he further agree that no country with an inadequate bureaucracy or insufficient technological capacity should be seen as a ready customer?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman is a very fair and well-informed controversialist in these matters, and would agree that these are all factors for assessment and report in the Sizewell inquiry.

Russian Nuclear Accident (Monitoring)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the arrangements for monitoring the effects in the United Kingdom of the accident at Chernobyl, and the results obtained.

As soon as news of the accident was received, the standing arrangements for monitoring air, water and foodstuffs, especially milk, were stepped up. The Departments mainly concerned are the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish and Welsh Offices, which have been working closely with the National Radiological Protection Board. Samples have been taken daily and since last Friday 2 May, daily bulletins have been issued by the NRPB after consultation with Government Departments. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has set up an incident room, from which advice on foodstuffs is available for members of the public.

The remnants of the cloud from Chernobyl arrived over the United Kingdom on 2 May. As a result, an increase in the normal background level of radiation was found in air samples taken at various parts of the country over the weekend. The levels found were nowhere near the levels at which there is any hazard to health, and more recent samples show that the levels in air are now falling rapidly as the cloud has moved away.

As a result of heavy rain in the northern part of England and Wales and in parts of Scotland, the levels of radiation in samples of rain water were found to be at a level where it was appropriate to warn people against drinking fresh rain water over long periods. That might apply to a few farmers in remote parts and, possibly, to some campers. There would be no hazard if the recently fallen rain were diluted with rain water already collected in water butts, or by streams, wells or reservoirs. The levels of radiation in piped water are less than one hundredth of the level at which any special action would be needed.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is responsible for the monitoring and control of foodstuffs. I understand that samples of milk and fresh produce have shown amounts of radioactivity which are below the level at which action ought to be considered. Levels of radiation are now likely to decline over the next few days. I should stress that in judging whether the levels of radiation found require any special action, we act in accordance with international recommendations published by the International Commission on Radiological Protection.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is also keeping a close watch on imports of food into the United Kingdom from Russia and Poland, which was dispatched after 26 April this year.

The House will appreciate from what I have said that the effects of the cloud have already been assessed and that none presents a risk to health in the United Kingdom. Extensive monitoring will continue and its results will be made available to the public and to the House.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The House will be grateful to the Secretary of State for making this statement and I hope it will deal with some of the natural concern that is being expressed around the country. I wish to ask the Secretary of State a number of questions based on what he has said.

Will the Secretary of State tell the House whether anyone in the Government has overall responsibility for the co-ordination of the monitoring, the analysis and, most important, the dissemination of information to the public? There is considerable confusion among members of the public and the media about the nature of the advice from the National Radiological Protection Board, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and other people who are making statements. Is it not absolutely essential that explicit, frank and open information is given to the public as regularly as possible?

Why is it that again, in this statement today, the Secretary of State has not been specific about the nature and the level of the radioactivity involved? The public are surely entitled to know these facts. Can the Secretary of State confirm that the majority of the contamination is iodine-131—an isotope with a half-life of eight days—but that, in addition, isotopes of tellurium, caesium-137, ruthenium, lanthanum and technetium have been detected? If that is true, what advice will be given about the longer-term nature of some of those isotopes and the consequences of their deposition?

Is the Secretary of State satisfied not only with the co-ordination of the monitoring but with its range and provision? Are sufficient localities being monitored in sufficient detail? Will the Secretary of State examine this and reconsider the situation?

Why has it not been possible so far for information to be given to the public on the basis of comparisons with the normal background levels of radiation? Why should the public not be told how much more radiation they are now being exposed to when compared with the normal background radiation? Is the Secretary of State satisfied that there is no need for the health authorities, for example, or the water authorities to give more detailed local information in areas where especially high levels of contamination have apparently occurred?

Can the Minister confirm that the highest levels of contamination were recorded on 3 May and that on 4 and 5 May those levels had declined and they are still continuing to decline? Will that information also be freely available to the public and the press?

Mr. Baker: I confirm what the hon. Member has said on the last point. My Department is co-ordinating the monitoring of this information. Our first indications that the radioactive cloud was over the country were on Friday; and over the weekend emergency operations were in progress. I was in touch with colleagues at that time. I agree with the hon. Gentleman when he asks the Government to be explicit, frank and open with information.

I have asked the NRPB, which has issued statements each day, to make available this afternoon a complete list of the data available to it in press offices in my Department, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It is bulky statistical information, but it represents all of the information that we have on monitoring. Initially, I think that only about 50 copies per press office will be available because it is bulky, but we will try to make more available during the day. Those who wish to know about that

[Mr. Baker]

information can approach the public inquiry points in the press offices of those three Departments. I agree that the information should be made available.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has opened a telephone line for public inquiries—it is 930 1196—and the Scottish Office will make a number available this afternoon, as will the Welsh Office. I strongly agree that the information should be available.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that quite a number of schools and other groups have entered into contracts to travel to Soviet Russia and paid deposits on those contracts, but that the cancellation insurance excludes radiation from the events that can lead to repayment of the deposit? Does the Government's advice that has been given to date and any advice that my right hon. Friend should give constitute a statement of public policy which would void such contracts so that deposits can be recovered? What advice do the Government have for the organisers of such trips, who must either pay the remainder of the money for the Whitsun holiday or lose their deposits, unless the contracts can be voided on grounds of public policy?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is quite right to raise this matter. No doubt he has a case in mind.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop *indicated assent.*

Mr. Baker: Local education authorities are responsible for the health and safety of children in their schools, and I expect them to act responsibly when carrying out that duty. The Foreign Office has already advised that visitors should avoid the western Ukraine, Byelorussia, Kiev and Minsk, Lithuania and north-east Poland. If my hon. Friend could let me have details of the case that he has in mind, I shall certainly raise it with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and with my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. I take his point about contracts.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the Secretary of State accept that the Government never expected such high levels of radioactivity from an incident so far away? Will he admit that, stripped of the gobbledegook, he has said today that the effect of the radiation on food, milk and water has come near to emergency reference levels? Will he also accept that there is grave discontent that, added to the continuing secrecy about some elements of nuclear activity — as was manifest last week at Dungeness—there is now unclear information for the public? Does he agree that the only solution is a daily county-by-county bulletin on the level of radioactive pollution? Does the right hon. Gentleman draw the conclusion that we on these Benches have long drawn and which the people of Britain clearly draw—they are concerned that the British industry is not safe enough and they do not want the nuclear programme to be expanded by a large majority?

Mr. Baker: I do not know whether that is alliance policy, or Liberal policy, but the hon. Gentleman cannot chide the Government about being frank. There are no party points to be made on this. The information which has been made available by the NRPB is the fullest information and the only information that the Government have on the monitoring. That information will be made available. It should be contrasted with what will be made available in Russia. None of this sort of information will ever be made available in Russia. I take the point that many people, being aware of the dangers of this type of incident, are rather bemused about the complexity of the matter. There is so much talk of becquerels, milliSieverts, curies and rems. I think that in simple terms people are asking: is it safe to drink milk?—the answer is yes; is it safe to drink water from the tap?—the answer is yes; is it necessary for children to take iodine tablets?—the answer is no.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for the informative comments that he made in his statement. In rural Scotland, however, many farms and houses prefer to use rain water for their water supplies, and this applies not only to individuals but to dairy herds. Will he confirm that he will be advising his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to use the facilities of monitoring services such as exist in the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research and in the Rowatt Institute in Aberdeen in order to ensure that the safeguarding of these water supplies and dairy herds is assisted in any investigations that he may make in Scotland?

Mr. Baker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has asked water authorities to assist such people, who may depend rather more on rain water than other people in the rest of the United Kingdom, by telling them where they can collect water from public mains supplies. Water authorities and environmental health authorities have worked together to ensure that anybody who depends on rain water gets the right advice and obtains access to the mains supply. The NRPB has said with regard to rain water that people who depend on it should not drink it for a period of a week.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Does the Secretary of State agree that we want to avoid unjustified panic, but we want also to avoid unnecessary risks, so that people must be as fully informed as possible about this and other accidents? Can he assure the House that every accident in Britain involving nuclear waste of any kind or nuclear energy has been fully reported? Can he ensure that any future accidents in Britain will also be fully reported?

Mr. Baker: The arrangements for reporting accidents —nuclear accidents—were set out in a reply on 26 July 1982 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) to a question asked by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). Those recommendations were made not by Government specifically but by the nuclear installations inspectorate, and it is those guidelines that we have followed since then.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): Will my right hon. Friend advise the House whether the NRPB is adequately equipped to monitor effectively the radiation levels in all parts of the country?

Mr. Baker: The NRPB, I think, has been doing a very good job. I think that Mr. Dunster has been very frank in the appearances that he has made on television over the weekend. The NRPB has a staff of some 300. It has monitoring bases at three of its laboratories—Chilton, Glasgow and Leeds. All nuclear installations in the United Kingdom, of course, have equipment that is capable of monitoring radioactivity.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): Is the Minister not aware that one expert has said that some tens of deaths will occur from cancer at some future stage because of this? While one appreciates that this could be a small number, relatively speaking, is he right to hold the opinion that there is no danger to public safety? Secondly, when was the incident room established. Will he confirm that the hot line has been set up just today and does he not think that this alarming lack of concern about informing the public of what may be occurring is symptomatic of the attitude of the Government in relation to these matters and puts a question mark over the way in which they have tackled this whole business?

Mr. Baker: No. The incident room was set up on Friday as soon as we knew that the radioactive cloud was over the United Kingdom. Up until then it had not been over the United Kingdom. Milk had been monitored since last Monday, when we first had news of the catastrophe in Russia.

Until the incident is over and it is possible to estimate the number of people exposed and the doses they have received, it will not be possible to produce the estimate for which the hon. Gentleman has asked. However, the likely total exposure will result in a very small additional risk to any one person. That has been emphasised by Mr. Dunster, who told me that the risk to individuals in Britain from the Russian reactor accident was very small.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): As one who supports the nuclear industry and acknowledges the high standards of those who work within it, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he agrees that it has been difficult for those who have tried to allay the fears of constituents over the weekend to find a common line from the many organisations involved? Would it not be helpful if the Government had a central point to which all information was fed, from which it could be disseminated to the media? This would ensure that they did not exaggerate the position and cause unnecessary alarm.

Mr. Baker: We have been operating the usual arrangements which exist within Whitehall for co-ordinating the Government's response to emergencies, and certain unusual circumstances. I am satisfied that these contingency arrangements have been working satisfactorily. Ministers have been kept fully up to date with the facts. I had talks with several Ministers yesterday and their response to the unfolding picture has been fully co-ordinated from the centre. It is inevitable that in a matter of this sort several Departments will be involved. The Department of Health and Social Security has responsibility for health, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is concerned with food in the United Kingdom and the testing of it. My Department is involved in environmental monitoring. The division of responsibilities is inevitable and one cannot get over it. I take note of what my hon. Friend has said, but it is the first time that the world has had to go through the experience of such a nuclear accident. I am certain that lessons will be learnt from it, and the lessons will be infinitely more valuable to the world if Russia is prepared to make more available to the world the effects within its own country.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Is the Minister aware that these events are assuming a particular significance in my constituency, where the first deliveries of nuclear fuel were made at Torness power station only 10 days ago? Is he aware also that the Soviet nuclear power agency is not the only one to have a reputation for excessive secrecy and misleading propaganda? Will he confirm that these events are likely to increase the background levels of radiation in the environment and in food for the long term? What, specifically, will the Government do about imports of food products from heavily contaminated areas of eastern Europe?

Mr. Baker: Imports from Russia and Poland are now being stopped at the port of entry at the request of the DHSS. Samples will be taken to the MAFF laboratory at Lowestoft. The European Commission is considering this afternoon appropriate measures for intra-Community trade and trade with certain eastern bloc countries. This is an important matter and imported foodstuffs will not be released from port until we are satisfied that radioactivity is not present in them.

Miss Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): As my right hon. Friend is responsible for co-ordinating Government activities in this instance, I ask him to repair the omission of any reference to those who are most at risk—those who are, or will be, returning from the Soviet Union or neighbouring countries. Is he satisfied with the actions that are being taken to give such individuals thorough monitoring at the time of their arrival in the United Kingdom and at later stages, as we know that radiation can have long-term effects?

Mr. Baker: I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern. The National Radiological Protection Board monitored the students who returned from Kiev and Minsk at the end of last week and the radiation levels detected gave no cause for concern. Travellers returning from north Russia and eastern Europe to the United Kingdom who wish to undergo reassurance monitoring should go to their main police station, where they will be put in touch with the relevant place under the national arrangements for the radioactivity scheme.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I thank the Minister for making a statement, and I recognise the difficulty in providing full information, but will the right hon. Gentleman recognise that there is widespread public anxiety about the implications of the accident and the possibility that such an accident might occur elsewhere in the world? As he has told the House, there are many Ministers with different responsibilities. Will he be so kind as to ask his colleagues to make possible a day in the House when we can discuss these matters, so that Members can put forward their anxieties and opinions and be given a measured Government answer? I think that the right hon. Gentleman will accept that there is a desire that goes across party lines to obtain some clarification of the full implications of what occurred in the Soviet Union, and of its long-term effect on our energy plans.

Mr. Baker: It will take some time to measure the effect, because exposures will vary in different countries, depending on the concentration of radioactivity in the cloud and the rainfall in a particular country. But I accept what the right hon. Gentleman says about fears that ordinary people have about this incident. I very much understand those fears. They arise from the unknown and from apparent secrecy. I have tried to allay those fears this afternoon by putting such information as we have before the country.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Why has the ban which, according to the tapes, the Commission has just imposed on east European produce specifically excluded East Germany, although most of eastern Europe's produce goes through East Germany under an abuse of the inner German trade agreement? Will my right hon. Friend inquire whether we have the power to impose a ban on East German produce, despite the terms of the inner German trade agreement?

Mr. Baker: I was not aware of that point, but I shall look into what my hon. Friend has said about East Germany this afternoon.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I thank the Secretary of State for making such information available, but perhaps I can press him a little further. Will he undertake to ensure that the information collected in the next week or so in made available? Will he confirm that the raw information will be made available, and that any analyses done by his or any other Department that leads to identification of the materials causing the radiation will also be made available? Moreover will he ensure that the Departments concerned are helpful about answering the questions of any members of the public who have a reasonable interest in this matter?

Mr. Baker: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's latter question is yes. I have announced that the information will be available through the public inquiry points in the various Government Departments. As the hon. Gentleman has said, the raw information or data will be of interest to scientists in the academic world and to analysts who can work on it. There is no reason why information should not be made available on a continuing basis, either daily or in batches of two days.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): Is my right hon. Friend aware that most comment on the radioactive contamination refers to a short-term problem, presumably attributed to iodine-131? Will he confirm the level of long-term radioactive contamination due to strontium-90 and caesium-137?

Mr. Baker: As the hon. Member for Copeland has said, the radioactivity of iodine-131 declines by half over a period of about eight or nine days. The radioactivity will remain for much longer in the other nuclides. That will, indeed, come out in the monitoring. We are fortunate in the United Kingdom because at this moment of time—I say, at this moment of time — the amount of precipitation of radioactivity is relatively low compared with other countries. The advice that I have received from scientists this morning and this afternoon is that the increase in radioactivity in the general background is very low, but there has been a small increase.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Secretary of State agree that openness is also important internationally? Does the European Commission propose to enter into discussion with COMECON about the monitoring of foodstuffs? What is the Government's attitude towards the proposal to ban imports from other east European countries than just Poland and the Soviet Union? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that many people in the British nuclear industry have long held grave reservations about the particular reactor that caused this international catastrophe, and have said as much for many years?

Mr. Baker: The European Commission has been meeting this afternoon and we will certainly take heed of what it says. If we were satisfied that imports had to be stopped from any country in the interest of the health of our people, we would stop them. There is no question about that.

Regarding the safety of the Russian reactor, hon. Members will have read enough in the weekend press to know that our scientists thought that the design of the reactor was inherently unstable. The Russians have been aware of that fact for some time. I hope that one outcome of the disaster will be that countries will be much more aware that, in the design of nuclear installations, they have an international obligation to take into account the views of others.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the most reprehensible aspects of the whole affair has been the way in which the opponents of nuclear power have deliberately sought to exaggerate the dangers and to exploit public fears? As I have a private water supply in Scotland, an expectant wife and young children, does he agree that I was right to advise them that there was more danger from luminous watches and alarm clocks around the house than from any fallout arising from the Chernobyl disaster?

Mr. Baker: There are, of course, many sources of radiation in the atmosphere. The level of background radioactivity varies in different parts of the country. I appreciate that such a disaster does cause public anxiety and concern. I have tried, this afternoon, to put the cards on the table to allay some of that. As I have said, the levels so far in the United Kingdom do not provoke great concern. That does not mean to say that we should not be vigilant in maintaining our monitoring and letting the public know of the consequences as soon as possible.

Mr. George Foulkes (Garrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Can the Secretary of State confirm that the Scottish Office issued a statement today saying that the statistics which it published yesterday were totally inaccurate? In view of that, will he review the accuracy, speed of collection and comprehensive nature of the gathering of such statistics? Since the effects of radiation are cumulative, will the right hon. Gentleman institute some kind of monitoring, especially of children, of the cumulative effects of the Chernobyl disaster, including rain, milk and entry into the food chain, coupled with discharges from Sellafield and other sources in the United Kingdom, and see what effect that total accumulation of radiation is having on children, particularly those in the west of Scotland?

Mr. Baker: I understand from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland that one figure was corrected yesterday. As I understand it, it was corrected downwards.

Mr. Foulkes: It was still wrong.

Mr. Baker: I am advised that inhalation of the cloud and skin exposures to radiation on the ground contribute very small doses to the body—about one ten-thousandth of the annual dose limit. Therefore, there need be no cause for concern.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that over the weekend and yesterday, Scotland had some very heavy rain storms? Some of the

Scottish media reported that the rain storms were from the cloud with the radiactive material. Can he confirm that there is no danger to people in Scotland, and that next week's visit by the Prime Minister and other senior members of the Government to the Conservative party conference in Perth will show that there is no danger?

Mr. Baker: I do not believe that the current level of radioactive precipitation in Scotland will divert my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister from visiting Scotland.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I thank the Secretary of State for the information he has given today and for his assurances that the fullest possible information will continue to be given. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the information will be given in its proper context? Old and young people are genuinely frightened by the statements that have appeared in the newspapers this weekend. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the childishly trivial remarks of the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and the ridiculously alarming remarks of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who are looking for cheap political points, do not help the situation?

Mr. Baker: I agree with the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's last question, but not the first part. It is very difficult to explain some of these technical matters in a simple way. It is not impossible, and we shall seek to do so. A frank explanation is the best way of doing that.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): In view of my right hon. Friend's strictures about the need for complete Soviet frankness in such matters, should we not be considering a little more than an expression of hope and trying to co-ordinate something which will induce the Soviets to come clean on their nuclear safety record? Should we not be trying to bring into this not only western European countries but COMECON countries which are most directly affected?

Mr. Baker: The COMECON countries seem to have been adversely affected in some cases. The initial reaction of the Soviet Government was to close in upon themselves and put down the shutters. That is perhaps the old tradition in which Russia has conducted itself over the centuries. It was only towards the end of last week that Russia began to open up and realised that there were advantages in doing so. A fairly full statement was made by the Soviet Government on Friday and Saturday. I hope that they will be frank and open, because radioactivity knows no national boundaries. The disaster has affected some of Russia's small neighbours. It is the duty of a powerful country such as Russia, which is capable of producing electricity from nuclear power, to be frank and open. Even at this stage, I feel that there was some shame in Russia that this disaster had occurred and the Government did not want to open up the matter. The tragedies in America, such as that involving the Challenger mission, have been dealt with openly.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appreciate that this matter is of grave concern to hon. Members and their constituents, but I must bear in mind the fact that we have a heavy day in front of us. The Adjournment debate must end at 7 pm. I will allow questions to continue for a further 10 minutes; that is to say, until a quarter past four. After that, we must move on.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): If the scientists are so unanimous in their condemnation of the technology in the RMBK plant in the Soviet Union, why was it that successive Governments did not protest at the development of that plant? They must have foreseen the inevitable disaster that has taken place. Why has there been a cover-up over the gas radiation leak from Dungeness A? Do the Government intend to make representations through the International Atomic Energy Agency to ensure access in France to the six PWR reactors, all of which are within 90 miles of London?

Mr. Baker: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Energy, intends to make a statement fairly soon about access to the International Atomic Energy Agency. It is a bit thick to say that somehow we are to blame for the design which was adopted by the Russian nuclear industry. I do not know what the reaction would have been if we had protested. We have made it clear that the design was unsuitable and inherently unstable so far as the United Kingdom was concerned. The responsibility in this area must lie in the Kremlin.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): Most of my constituents will be reassured by my right hon. Friend's statement this afternoon which, if I understood it correctly, said that the increase in radiation in parts of Britain was at a level of only one hundredth of that which would have caused a potential danger. Will my right hon. Friend accept that many more people would be reassured if they could measure the amount of increased radiation caused by the accident against, for example, the radiation they get from television sets in their homes? Can my right hon. Friend provide those figures?

Mr. Baker: I will consider that. Many people would be surprised at the amount of radon radioactivity which is naturally in the atmosphere. Someone having a picnic in Cornwall and sitting close to a granite rock may be subjected to a high level of radiation.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does the Minister accept that there are genuine anxieties in Scotland, and that those anxieties are not helped by the contradictory statements which are made from one day to another? Is the Minister satisfied with the co-ordination between the Scottish Office, the Milk Marketing Board and the consumer? Why is there such a delay between one test and the other?

Mr. Baker: As I understand it, there is good co-operation. The Scottish Office follows the matter closely and is part of the team doing so.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, this morning, there was a most responsible programme on the radio during which two experts—one from the NRPB and one from Newcastle university—sought to still the perfectly justifiable fears of a number of the people who rang in? Because of the unique ability of the Public Information Office to disseminate information, will my right hon. Friend ensure that that office makes sure that the BBC is positively briefed in the next few days on this subject so that it can disseminate informaton to the people at large?

Mr. Baker: I take entirely my hon. Friend's point about the media's importance in the past few days. In my judgment, they have been handling the matter very responsibly. Today, I saw a further broadcast on the

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midday news and the 1 o'clock news in which the interviewer put the difficult points straight to a leading United Kingdom physicist. Those points were answered frankly. The interviewer did not let the physicist wriggle away from them. Over the weekend, I saw several interviews, as, I am sure, did hon. Members on both sides of the House, and was impressed by their frankness and openness.

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the concern among hon. Members about the Government not making representations about the accident in Russia does not imply that the British Government or Britain were to blame for what happened? Why were representations not made? Will representations about such models be made from now on? It has been reported—none of us can yet be sure that it has any validity—that the first generation of Magnox stations in Britain have similar weaknesses. Are the Government checking that? Will a statement be made on that aspect?

Mr. Baker: I am sure that, as a result of this incident, there will be quite justified international concern about safety at nuclear power stations which will be made evident by Governments and international agencies. The right hon. Gentleman must appreciate that the Soviet Communist party at its 27th congress approved a massive expansion of its nuclear generating programme, doubling its size in the next few years. I do not know whether the Soviet Government will listen too much to representations by other countries when they probably do not take too many of their own people into their confidence.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): In an attempt to put the matter into context, assuming the worst case and on the best information available, how does the total radiation from Chernobyl compare with the total radiation from the Hiroshima bomb? Given that Chernobyl is basically part of the Ministry of Defence in Russia rather than an electricity generator, why have not traces of plutonium been registered? What help are we giving the Russians?

Mr. Baker: I am not in a position to answer any of those questions. I shall try to find the answers. I do not have off the cuff the comparison between radiation fallout at Hiroshima and radiation fallout at Chernobyl.

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk (Knowsley, North): Send a message to the Box.

Mr. Baker: I suspect that, even if I sent a message to the Box now, the information would not be readily available in the next few minutes.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): At what time was, first the Secretary of State and, secondly, the Prime Minister first informed that British scientists were talking to their Russian counterparts about the problems at Chernobyl?

Mr. Baker: I should have to have notice of that question.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): This is a matter of concern to my constituents who live in the affected area. As my right hon. Friend was kind enough last Friday to visit my constituents, will he put the matter into perspective by emphasising that it is perfectly safe to drink the tap water in Bury? Does my right hon. Friend accept that the announcement and the questions which followed are in stark contrast to the way in which the matter was handled in the Soviet Union?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend can certainly assure his constituents that it is perfectly safe to drink and to use tap water anywhere in Britain, including Bury. It is perfectly safe also to drink milk.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): How long does the right hon. Gentleman expect the emergency operation to be maintained? What is happening to the radioactive cloud? Is it expected to move again in this direction? I ask that question specifically because, last week when I raised it, I received a reassuring reply which was overtaken by events that have worried the entire country.

Mr. Baker: From time to time, Ministers are prone to make optimistic assessments. I shall certainly not get into the business of weather forecasting and of trying to judge what will happen to the cloud. Monitoring will be maintained until we feel that the emergency has ended.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why does the nuclear industry operate in reportable incidents only by guidelines and not by law? If the right hon. Gentleman wants to be frank and open, why does he not treat nuclear incidents like the reportable incidents in the coal mines where anything more than a broken arm is reportable under the mines and quarries legislation? If that were done, the right hon. Gentleman could answer the charge which has properly been laid against him, that he is attacking the Soviet Union for failing to respond properly to the disaster but is doing the same himself? Is the right hon. Gentleman doing that because he agrees with the Secretary of State for Energy that nuclear power is the safest form of energy known to man? Would it not be a good idea for the right hon. Gentleman and the Secretary of State for Energy to put a paper before the Cabinet to recommend halting the pit closure programme in the light of the recent disaster and the others that have preceded it worldwide?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman goes a little wide of the matter, but I do not criticise him for that because for some time he has taken that line about the nuclear industry. I have referred to the procedures which we have followed since 1982. They were recommended to us by the nuclear installations inspectorate, which is answerable to the Secretary of State for Employment and is concerned with safety. Those procedures have been followed in dealing with incidents in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that much of the disquiet and opposition voiced in the past few days about the nuclear power industry and its safety record is of legitimate concern? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, so long as Britain or any other country in the northern hemisphere has a nuclear power industry, there is a dangerous and implicit possibility of pollution following an explosion or emission from a nuclear power station? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, so long as we have a nuclear power industry, problems will be associated with the disposal of radioactive waste? Does he agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that we need a debate in Parliament so that opposition to the whole nuclear programme and its dangers can be voiced here, as they have been voiced outside?

Mr. Baker: I shall certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's point about a debate—if it has not already been heard—to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. The hon. Gentleman has moved into the matter of safety of nuclear power generation. I remind him that the United Kingdom has a very good safety record. There has been no full-scale major incident during 25 years of operation of civil power stations in the United Kingdom. Very high standards of safety were involved in the design, and construction of British nuclear power plants. Safety is very important and is the predominate element in the generation of electricity from nuclear power.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Implicit throughout the right hon. Gentleman's statement has been the belief that there is a threshold below which levels of radiation are safe. What is the right hon. Gentleman's evidence for such a threshold? Is it not equally tenable that radiation, like other poisonous substances, becomes more dangerous with each increment? Is not the idea of a threshold really a myth?

Mr. Baker: I do not agree. There are safety levels, and they are not levels that we, or British scientists in particular, have conjured up. For example, the NRPB is working to recommendations published by the International Commission on Radiological Protection.

Dr. Cunningham: As the purpose of today's statement is to clarify the position for the public and to allay their genuine fears and concerns, I should like to re-emphasise the point I put earlier to the Secretary of State. It is important to give the public information in such a way as to enable them to understand it and make valid comparisons. Although we know that the general public do not every day bump into milliSieverts or becquerels, they can make simple numerical comparisons. There is no good reason why people should not be given information. Nevertheless, we want all the information to be published — and statements which make simple numerical comparisons with existing background levels of radiation.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman did make that point at the beginning and it was also made by my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) and others during questions. I think that the point is valid and I will see whether some comparisons can be put out relatively quickly.

Mr. Ashley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it not be possible for the Foreign Secretary to make a statement tomorrow, because there is a great deal of anxiety among people from Britain who want to visit Europe and do not know which parts of Europe will be safe because of the Russian secrecy? Possibly that statement could be the first of a series by the Foreign Secretary to give as much information as possible to people hoping to travel abroad.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman's comments will have been heard by those on the Government Front Bench.

News International Plant, Wapping

4.21 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, to discuss a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the conduct of the Metropolitan police at Wapping on 3 May."

The matter is specific because it is the responsibility of the Home Secretary and it is important because it deals with the reputation and credibility of the Metropolitan police and the democratic rights of ordinary British citizens.

The House will know that there were a number of eye witnesses to those events, including hon. Members. I was there and what I saw was a police riot. I was absolutely ashamed of what I saw. I never thought that I would see events of that type in this country.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, London printers are not criminals who can and should be bludgeoned in that indiscriminate way. The police response was wholly disproportionate to anything that had happened. After the first minor incident, for hours there were violent police baton charges which were completely unnecessary. I have a preliminary list of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of 44 people who were injured.

There was no warning of the brutal attacks, nor was the crowd allowed to leave. At about 12 o'clock I tried to leave Wellclose square. As I tried to leave I was stopped by riot police with batons and shields. I said that I wanted to leave and they said that they were not allowed to let me. *[Interruption.]* There are hooligans in the Chamber. I am giving an eye witness account of what happened to me. I hope that the House will want to know what happened and not what the hooligans in the House want to shout about.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should make his submission as to the urgency and importance of this matter.

Mr. Leighton: The urgency is that I tried to leave and they told me that no one was allowed to leave. I explained who I was and asked why I was not allowed to leave. They said that it was on the orders of a superior officer. When I spoke to the superior officer he asked me whether I was alone. He then allowed me to leave. If I had wanted to lead the crowd away, I would not have been allowed to leave. The urgency is that unless some change is made soon people will be killed by the Metropolitan police. The House should discuss that.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the conduct of the Metropolitan police at Wapping on 3 May."

I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said. He knows that the only decision I have to make is whether to give this matter precedence over the orders set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Not on that decision.

Mr. Benn: I am not questioning your decision. Is it in order for the grave events that occurred two miles from this Chamber on Saturday and Sunday night to be raised in the House on Thursday in the debate on crime prevention? That would provide an early opportunity for those who were present to report on the brutal battering by the police.

Mr. Speaker: If the debate is on the Adjournment, it will be a wide debate and I judge that it will be in order to discuss matters of that kind.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the statements made by my right hon. and hon. Friends, various statements made in the press and allegations by Conservative Members and as the Home Secretary is in the House and is accountable to the House, would it be in order for us to know whether he will inquire into these matters and make a statement prior to the debate on Thursday?

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not wish to challenge your earlier ruling in any way. However, would it be in order for the Secretary of State for Social Services to be asked to attend the debate on Thursday and make a statement about the directions given to the Health Service on Saturday evening? Policemen were taken to a hospital near to the Wapping printing plant, but printers and other people injured in the demonstration were taken to St. Bartholomew's hospital, which is some distance away, and ambulances were prevented from getting to the scene of the police violence against the pickets on Saturday evening. Those are serious matters.

Mr. Speaker: None of those are matters for me.

Nuclear Accidents (Contingency Arrangements)

4.26 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the non-existence of the Government's contingency plans for the protection of those at risk following nuclear accidents and the lack of information available to the public."

This matter is specific because it relates to widespread confusion, anxiety and justifiable resentment resulting from everyone's inability to obtain information, counsel or guidance on precautions to be adopted in the current situation. That is particularly so on the part of those engaged in farming in a "grass only" discipline who had already turned out their herds to graze this year.

This matter is important because that inability highlights the ill-prepared nature of the Government's readiness. That is typified by the response I received when I tried to ask the Secretary of State to list the locations where people could have free access to emergency plans and procedures for them to prepare against such radioactive fallout. I was told that one cannot ask a question about something that does not exist. When I went further and asked why no plans existed, I was again told one cannot ask about something that does not exist. One is not to know that does not exist until one finds out.

This matter is urgent because the level of incidence of elements such as tellurium — 132, and iodine — 131 occurring in such quantities, and the nature of those elements being short-lived but doubly dangerous, means that decisive action is required to prevent the inclusion of affected milk supplies in infant formula milk and school quotas. Perhaps we should finally find a use for the food mountains of Europe.

Is it not ironic that we should criticise the Russians, quite properly, for their inability to provide information about British subjects being exposed to radiation, yet the Department of Health and Social Security refuses access, as it did to me last Friday, to information relating to British subjects consuming the same stuff. I urge you, Mr. Speaker, and the House to agree to adjourn the business of the House to enable a debate to take place on those most urgent and other related matters.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the non-existence of the Government's contingency plans for the protection of those at risk following nuclear accidents and the lack of information available to the public."

I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said—as, indeed, I listened carefully to the exchanges earlier this afternoon. I regret that I do not consider the matter that the hon. Gentleman has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister for the Adjournment of the House shall, if not previously concluded, lapse at Seven o'clock.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Concessionary Television Licences for State Retirement Pensioners

4.31 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for concessionary television licences for State retirement pensioners and others.

In 1982, I presented a similar Bill, upon which the House divided. The Bill was accepted by 187 votes to nil—a clear expression of the will of Parliament on this issue. I presented similar Bills in 1983 and again in 1984, so this is the fourth time that I have done so.

The statutory authority for a concessionary television licence is contained in the Wireless Telegraphy (Broadcast Licence Charges and Exemption) Regulations 1970. An extension of that scheme was introduced in 1978 by the then Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees). Following representations in 1983 by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr Skinner) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), a further extension was made to provide for physically and mentally disabled persons living in local authority residential accommodation and residents in categories of sheltered homes in which elderly persons were present and already in receipt of a concession.

Each increase in the cost of a television licence makes the position for those who do not receive the concession compared with those who do so much worse. In addition, as expected, the reduction in central Government support to local authorities, plus rate-capping problems, has meant a reduction in the local authority help that used to be available. That is shown by the fact that, of the 17,161 persons receiving local authority help, 12,555 are in Yorkshire and Humberside, 11,518 of whom are in one authority alone—Rotherham. My own authority's small but welcome contribution suffered because of Government cuts.

Pensioners are debarred from the present national scheme simply because their accommodation does not come within the rules, although the circumstances in which they live are the same as or little different from those of people who are eligible. While 635,000 persons in the United Kingdom benefit from the 5p residential care concessionary television licence, 4·8 million exclusively pensioner households—some in the public sector, but most in the private-rented or owner-occupied sector—do not. Clearly, that is inequitable, and it is a matter of concern to many right hon. and hon. Members and to all pensioners and pensioner organisations.

Without doubt, the right approach would be to increase pensions to such a level as to enable pensioners to pay the cost of a television licence without a concession, but it is evident that that happy position will not be reached yet. Therefore, action has to be taken by the Government. My Bill makes that possible.

To include in the concessionary scheme all exclusively pensioner households would cost about £220 million and would at the same time protect the present recipients of the concession. To raise that income by increasing the cost of all other licences would be an unfair burden on the unemployed, the sick and other low-income families. However, it could be raised, either by increasing the basic

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rate of income tax by only 0·2p, or by increasing VAT by only 0·24 per cent. But why not dispense with television licences altogether, thus avoiding all possible anomalies, at a cost of £952·5 million? That could be raised either by increasing the basic rate of income tax by only 0·8p or by increasing VAT by 1 per cent.

There are other ways of raising the income. About 98 per cent. of general households have a television set, but £80 million is not paid because people do not pay their television licence fees. Why should there not be a flat rate for all television licences for all households, except those who do not wish to take part in the scheme? The checking of the other 2 per cent. who say that they do not have a television, but probably have one anyway, would be simpler.

My Bill, if supported by the House and allowed by the Government to proceed, would give us the opportunity to discuss the issue and the means of funding, while protecting present recipients. The Bill is fair and equitable to all, which is not the present position. The Bill may not be allowed to proceed, but my presenting it is a reminder to a future Labour Government, if they are returned to power, that a past Labour Government promised to phase out television licences for state pensioners and others in the lifetime of a Parliament. I am reminding them of that promise.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Allen McKay, Mr. Joseph Ashton, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. William O'Brien, Mr. Alec Woodall, Mr. David Winnick, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mr. Roy Mason, Mr. Terry Patchett and Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Concessionary Television Licences for State Retirement Pensioners

Mr. Allen McKay accordingly presented a Bill to provide for concessionary television licences for State retirement pensioners and others: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 6 June and to be printed. [Bill 156.]

Prisons

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Mr. Speaker: Before we move on to this important debate on the situation in Her Majesty's prisons, I remind the House that the debate must finish at 7 o'clock. We have had a later start than I hoped, because of an important statement. I hope that hon. Members will bear that in mind.

4.37 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The occasion for this debate is the recent outbreak of riot and destruction in our prisons. Before I sit down I shall bring the House briefly up to date with our assessment of those events and their consequences. What was missing from the question and answer sessions last week, and what I want to give the House today—succinctly, I hope—is an account of how the Government see the future of our prisons and the conditions for those who live and work in them. I hope to cover the size of the prison population, the condition of the prison estate, the resources, in men and money, that are at the disposal of the service, and the systems of management, work organisation and training that serve the prisons. I shall try to slice pieces out of my speech, but inevitably it will have to contain a good deal of matter, and I fear that that will limit the extent to which I shall be able to give way.

I refer, first, to the size of the prison population. As everyone in the House this afternoon knows, the trend has been upwards under recent Governments of both parties. When I became Home Secretary last September, the prison service was grappling with the effects of a sudden and most disturbing surge in numbers. From just over 43,000 at the beginning of November 1984, the prison population had risen by over 5,000 in nine months to a record 48,200 at the beginning of August last year. The Government, at short notice, provided over 2,000 additional places and recruited additional staff to help relieve the hard-pressed local prisons. Lindholme was bought, converted and brought into use in 16 weeks — a remarkable achievement, which went almost unnoticed.

I am glad to say that so far, although things could change, there is little evidence that this year we shall have to face a comparable surge in the population. In recent months, in contrast to the rapid increase during the early part of 1985, the total population has been relatively stable. On 25 April it stood at 47,250, 1,000 lower than the peak reached in early August last year, but I emphasise that we cannot afford to relax or be in the least complacent about the underlying situation.

The House will note that last year's surge was handled without massive recourse to police cells. That was because, between 1984 and 1985, we saw the first fruits of the accelerated programme of prison building. Three new establishments, providing 1,000 places, were opened at Wayland, Thorn Cross and Stocken, and 500 newly built places were brought in last year at existing prisons. The aim of that programme is not just to keep pace with the prison population, but to reduce and then eliminate the grotesque overcrowding in some of our prisons that we found when taking office. Sins of omission often go undetected for a time. I believe that it is one of the

unremarked scandals of the period 1974 to 1979 that, while the prisons filled, the Government of the day attempted no serious remedy. They sat tight and hoped that no one would notice, and the prison service is paying the penalty for that today.

That is why we had to set in hand the largest prison-building programme this century. It took time, since we inherited a tiny programme and no preparation for a large-scale programme. Nevertheless, we have made a remarkable start. From 1979-80 to January 1986, total expenditure was £322 million. The building programme includes a total of 18 new prisons. These new prisons will produce more than 8,000 places by the early 1990s, together with a further 5,500 produced by 25 major capital schemes in existing establishments, as well as the opening of Lindholme and of a former open borstal establishment for prison purposes. In addition, schemes either in the prison-building programmes or planned will provide about 10,000 existing places with integral sanitation.

These developments do not only mean improved conditions for prisoners. They also mean better working conditions for staff. Integral sanitation, for example, means that staff no longer have to supervise what by modern standards is the fearful practice of slopping out. Improvements in staff facilities — staff social centres, showers and lockers—are also included in the building programme.

I should now like to consider the scope for reducing the growth in the prison population or, indeed, reducing the population absolutely. I realise that there are many Opposition Members who have placed almost all their emphasis on reducing the prison population. Without going into the whole of the argument, that arguments ignores that we have a judiciary that is independent of the Executive. Parliament sets the framework of the law within which judges make their decisions. My job is not to dictate to the judges, but to ensure that places are available for those whom the courts consider it necessary to commit to custody. Indeed, the public are entitled to know that those whom the courts consider must be committed to custody can be safely and securely contained.

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk (Knowsley, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I should like to finish my point and then I shall give way, although I do not intend to give way often.

I cannot allow a situation to arise where I say to the courts, "Here is an offender whom you, having heard the evidence, believe to be guilty and whom you propose to send to prison, but you must not send him to prison because the prisons are too full." A Government who took that line would be rightly and severely condemned.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: The right hon. Gentleman is correct. No Opposition Member has ever made that point. The right hon. Gentleman, in answer to my previous interventions on this subject, has given the impression that the sole argument for reducing the prison population rests in some way on channelling the discretion of the judiciary. That is not the case. Those of us who have made the case for a substantial and permanent reduction in the prison population over the past decade have put forward several viable means of reducing the population. Those proposals have come from the Conservative Benches as well as from the Opposition. The judiciary could at least help to create a climate more conducive to shorter prison sentences, as the Home Secretary's predecessor and his predecessor's predecessor were successful in doing.

Mr. Hurd: I shall deal with some of the hon. Gentleman's suggestions later in my speech. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's first point is now common ground on both sides of the House. However, I constantly read suggestions that we should impose a limit on the number of people whom the courts should send to prison.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The Home Secretary has said that it is unthinkable that the courts should be influenced not to imprison people. Why, therefore, did he authorise a circular to the courts on 30 April in which he advised the courts:

> "Where persons on bail are due to appear for summary trial in respect of matters for which they are likely to receive a custodial sentence, it may be desirable to adjourn the proceedings. Courts might also give very careful attention to the matter before imposing periods of immediate or suspended imprisonment in default of payment of such matters as maintenance, fines and rates."

The Secretary of State was telling the courts that, regardless of what they think, they should not send people to prison.

Mr. Hurd: If the right hon. Gentleman reads the circular he will see that it does not deal with disposals. It deals with bail and with the timings of hearings. Specifically, it does not attempt to tell the courts that they must not send people to prison because the prisons are too full.

In relation to the point raised by the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk), the Government should have a view about the role of prisons and about sentencing as part of their policy for law and order. I have made my views plain. They coincide with those of my predecessor and of the Court of Appeal. Those who commit the worst offences—such as offences of serious violence or drugs trafficking — must expect to spend very long periods in custody. The public expect, and deserve, to be protected from such offenders and to see them receive a just measure of punishment.

For those convicted of less serious offences, however, custody should be used sparingly. I inherited, and intend to continue, a policy of emphasising credible and tough alternatives to imprisonment. We cannot direct the courts to use them, but they must have a full range of non-custodial options available to them; options which are not "soft", but which are practical and effective, and seen to be so. For example, we have had striking success in the expansion of probation and community service orders. The Criminal Justice Act 1982 strengthened the courts' powers to attach specific requirements to the probation order and there has been a significant revival in its use. Community service has grown rapidly from over 13,000 orders in 1979 to nearly 34,000 in 1984. Community service has now been extended throughout England and Wales and is available for all offenders aged 16 or over.

We intend to build on that success and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State may develop that point. The recently published White Paper includes a proposal to strengthen supervision orders on juveniles involving intermediate treatment programmes by backing them with custodial sanctions for breach if they were used as an alternative to custody. We plan also to expand the

[Mr. Hurd]

attendance centre network. We are seeking to reverse the decline in the use of the fine, and we are taking steps to improve the administration of the criminal justice system, which will help, I hope, to keep people out of custody on remand. As the hon. Member for Knowsley, North knows, we are trying to cut delay in the courts and to improve the flow of court business. I hope that the introduction of statutory limits on the time that it takes to bring court proceedings will be a big step forward.

By these and other means—I have mentioned some of the points which the hon. Member for Knowsley, North has advocated—the Government are seeking to take the public and the courts with us in ensuring that those who need to go to prison do so, and that a range of effective alternatives are available for those who do not.

I should like to discuss the question of total resources, not just the resources for the building programme. Since coming to office the Government have substantially and consistently increased spending on the prison service. Between the financial years 1979-80 and 1985-86, expenditure on the prison service rose by 25 per cent. in real terms. Within that total, planned expenditure on the building programme and on redevelopment of the prison estate rose by 173 per cent. in real terms, whereas, under Labour, expenditure on the prison estate went down by 20 per cent. Nor has the additional expenditure on buildings been at the expense of expenditure on staff. Between the financial years 1979-80 and 1985-86 the number of prison officers rose by some 18 per cent.—it now stands at a record level of almost 19,000 — while the cost of employing them rose by some 43 per cent. in real terms.

These figures compare, as we established at Question Time last week, with an increase over the same period in the prison population of about 12 per cent.—that is, a rise of 18 per cent. for prison officers, and a 12 per cent. rise in prison population. That is a striking improvement in the ratio between staff and prisoners and it shows the emptiness of the charge that we have been starving the prisons of staff.

Looking to the future, the Government have expressed their commitment in the public expenditure White Paper to give priority continuously to the prison service. The financial provision for 1986-87 at £639 million, represents an increase of about £48 million—that is 8 per cent.—over planned expenditure for 1985-86 and the figures continue upwards for succeeding years.

I am sorry to weary the House with figures. I have gone through some of them quickly to illustrate the scale of the investment that we are making in the prison service, as part of the law and order budget, in both buildings and staff. We have turned round the previous neglect of our penal system and have provided a firm base on which the prison service can build for the future. These increased resources carry with them the responsibility to ensure that the resources are used in such a way as to achieve the best value for the taxpayer's money. We are not satisfied—we cannot be—that this is being achieved at present, particularly in the use of prison staff.

In what I have to say about this I want to make it clear that I am not in any way attacking prison officers or governors. Their job of running prisons can often be difficult and sometimes dangerous. It is a job that is often too little understood by the public at large. Nevertheless, those who follow prison matters closely — that is everyone in the Chamber — knows that the working practices and arrangements in our prisons are far from satisfactory. The pattern of rapidly rising expenditure on prisons which I have described has not been matched to anything like the degree that it should be by improvement in the regimes for inmates. Among the reasons for this are undoubtedly inefficiencies in working practices within prisons.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): *rose——*

Mr. Hurd: No, I have already given way twice and I need to make progress.

Let us consider for example, overtime. The cost of overtime working by prison officers has risen dramatically in recent years. In 1979-80 the cost of overtime was £34·3 million, and in 1985-86 the cash limit for overtime stood at £81·6 million—an increase of 137 per cent. in cash terms. Overtime has now reached the point where it constitutes on average 30 per cent. of prison officers' earnings, and, because overtime is voluntary, some officers are working in excess of 20 to 30 hours overtime per week. That is not good for them or for management. It is not a situation that we can prolong indefinitely.

Efforts to contain and control levels of overtime working are not new. In April 1976, when overtime was averaging 12 hours a week per prison officer, a system was introduced which allocated a budget of hours to each establishment. That system, introduced by the then Labour Government, failed in the face of opposition from the Prison Officers Association. Last year, to exert better control over overtime spending, responsibility for the overtime budget was devolved to the four regional offices of the prison service. This year we are both continuing those arrangements and extending them to cover all pay and pay-related costs of prison staff. This change does not mean that overtime expenditure is being cut. In fact, the cash limit for overtime in the current year—at £87·4 million—represents an increase of about 5 million on last year's limit. The notion that we have been seeking some sort of confrontation by cutting the total of overtime without consultation cannot survive a look at the figures. We need to reassert proper control over spending in our prisons, particularly on overtime, and this lies at the root of the dispute between the Prison Officers Association and the Prison Department.

The Government have never claimed that overtime is unnecessary in the prison service. Conditioned hours are inadequate to cover all tasks, not least because existing shift systems depend on overtime to provide staff cover, particularly at weekends. It is the present levels of overtime that we have to question. Existing systems of attendance and complementing prevent us from using staff in the best way. The shift systems are too rigid, resulting in too many staff attending at some times and too few at others.

It was for this reason that, following extensive discussion with the national executive committee of the Prison Officers Association, we commissioned last year, and announced, a study by a joint team of prison service personnel and outside management consultants to see whether better systems of complementing and attendance for prison officers could be found. The report of that study has just been received. I have not yet had an opportunity to consider it in detail with colleagues. I shall obviously do this urgently, and when I have worked out proposals

I intend, given a successful resolution of the present dispute, that they should be the subject of discussion with the Prison Officers Association, as well as with other interested parties. The report justifies the stance of the Government over the inefficiency of existing systems and confirms that an opportunity exists, if new practices can be adopted, for improving dramatically the lot of both inmates and staff. It suggests that there may be a waste of resources, amounting to 15 or 20 per cent. We shall publish the report with our comment on it.

I understand how hard it is to change, and changing working practices is always a difficult process for those involved, particularly when, as in this case, there is such a close relationship between those practices and take-home pay. Like my predecessor, I have made it clear that we are ready to discuss with the Prison Officers Association new systems and procedures, including new pay arrangements, which will continue to provide a fair level of take-home pay, while allowing both prison officers and management to escape from the shackles of dependence on overtime. This is not being done simply out of a desire to get the accounting right, to satisfy the Public Accounts Committee, or to enforce the cash limit. The point goes wider than that.

We are spending, as I have illustrated, record sums on the prisons and employing a record number of staff, but only if that money and those staff are used sensibly will the lot of both prisoners and staff be improved.

Against the background of the record levels of expenditure on the staff and buildings of the prison service which I have described, I think that many hon. Members have found, and perhaps still will find, the current dispute between the Prison Officers Associaton and the Prison Department difficult to understand. The association says that it is concerned about the maintenance of safe manning levels and regimes and seeks the right to determine in negotiation what those manning levels should be. I am as concerned as the POA about the safety of prison officers and their professional standards. I have repeatedly made it clear that management is ready to consult the POA about manning levels. Obviously I cannot concede — no Government could — that the union has a right to determine those levels.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): It is not asking for that.

Mr. Hurd: I am coming to that point. In effect that would give the union, not the Government or Parliament, the right to set the budget for the prison service.

In my discussions with them before last Wednesday's events, POA leaders said that they were prepared to accept management's right to manage and that they did not seek to challenge my view that if, at the end of the day, agreement could not be reached on manning levels, management would have to decide them. In the light of those undertakings, and the clear edging towards agreement, it is difficult to understand where lay the POA's continuing problem in accepting my formula for considering these matters. Nevertheless, I welcomed its recognition of management's rights, and in return I set out in my letter of 22 April to the POA's general secretary, Mr. Evans, an agenda for the future. The House will recall that that agenda included a rapid settlement of this year's pay claim, including the outstanding question of a reduction in the working week for prison officers, and the immediate payment of tax compensation on housing allowance for 1985-86, which had been a vexed point. Thirdly, it included bringing forward as fast as possible the work on new shift systems and pay arrangements, which I have already mentioned, for detailed discussion with the POA, with a view to the new arrangements being in place by April next year.

Unfortunately, as the House will also recall, the national executive of the POA felt unable to respond by lifting its industrial action; indeed, even as I spoke with it on Monday last, that action continued in a particularly unacceptable and dangerous form at Gloucester. For my part, I was not, nor am I now, prepared to talk in substance about issues of crucial importance to the future of the prison service under the continuing threat of further industrial action. The national executive of the POA then introduced its overtime ban, with tragic consequences on Wednesday night, about which we all know.

We are still assessing the events of last Wednesday and their consequences, but it is clear that the situation deteriorated rapidly after midday last Wednesday and the issue of the POA's instructions to its members to withdraw co-operation with management and to institute an overtime ban. I reported twice to the House last week on the major disturbances that took place at Lewes, Wymott, Bristol, and Northeye prisons and at Erlestoke youth custody centre. There were lesser incidents at some 12 other prison establishments. Further disruption took place in a number of establishments on Thursday and Friday, but on nothing like the scale of Wednesday night. The number and severity of incidents decreased and by the weekend all was quiet.

By a miracle, no one was seriously injured during the disturbances of last week. Of the 50 or so inmates who made bids to escape, 13 are still unlawfully at large. The worst effects were undoubtedly on the prison estate. Prison buildings were damaged in a large number of establishments. Although most of the damage was fairly minor, there was serious damage at Bristol, Erlestoke, Wymott and Gloucester, and at Northeye the prison has temporarily had to be vacated. In all about 800 prison places were put out of action. I cannot yet give the House an assessment of the total cost of putting things right, but it will certainly run into some millions of pounds.

Since Friday prison staff and contractors have been working as quickly as possible, and by the end of this week all buildings, apart from those at Northeye, will be weatherproof. Where necessary, locks have been changed, doors are being replaced — in some places on a temporary basis—and windows repaired, and I hope that at Northeye we shall have some 50 inmates back in the prison within the next two weeks.

As the House knows, I acknowledge these are extremely serious events, and from the outset I have believed that they should be the subject of an inquiry. The form and scope of this must be compatible with any police investigation into alleged offences. I have invited Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir James Hennessy, to conduct an inquiry into the recent disturbances and the handling of them in order to see whether any general lessons need to be learnt. Sir James has agreed to do this. I also take the opportunity to repeat the thanks that I expressed last week on behalf of the whole House to the members of the prison governor grades, those prison staff who remained at their posts and the members of the police and fire services who helped to restore the situation.

[Mr. Hurd]

Following the decision of the POA last Thursday to suspend its industrial action and my own procedural proposal made in the House on Thursday, which it accepted, I am glad to say that useful talks took place at the Home Office last Friday. It was agreed that the suspension of industrial action meant the restoration of normal working. This allowed for the return to duty of those officers who had been suspended.

It was also agreed in the discussions last Friday that a series of further meetings would take place on the lines I had outlined, designed to achieve the simultaneous calling off of industrial action and the discussion of the agenda which I had set out for the future. The next meeting in that series will take place tomorrow. I am sure that the whole House will hope for good progress on the basis set out in my statement last Thursday.

To conclude, we are inevitably and rightly moving into a new phase in the history of the prison service. The service faces many problems and difficulties, which we have not sought to disguise, but it has two relatively new assets of which we have to make the best possible use. The first is the willingness of the Government to invest substantial resources in the service. The second is the realisation, to which I hope we have all come or will come shortly, that by changing to more sensible ways of running prisons further resources can be released.

The question in our minds is not whether change should happen, but of what form it should take and how the benefit should be distributed between prison staff, prison regimes—that is, the way in which prisoners are treated —and the taxpayer. We want to achieve the necessary changes by discussion and co-operation. That is the purpose of our present discussions with the POA. An early end to the threat of industrial action will put the process on a sound footing.

I hope that out of the damage and disaster of Wednesday night will come a fresh understanding, fresh energy and fresh good will. I am grateful to right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House who take a personal interest in our prisons; I wish there were more of them. In view of the situation which I have described, sombre though it is in many ways, and in view of the two new assets which I have also described, there are opportunities here as well as problems. I hope that we can work together to turn those opportunities to good account.

5.4 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Six nights ago the Home Secretary came to the House to announce that arson and anarchy had broken out in 18 prisons and other penal establishments. In making that announcement he was admitting the breakdown of the Government's prisons policy, the absence of a Government penal policy, the consequences of the Government's obdurate and incompetent industrial relations policy and the failure of the Government's much-trumpeted law and order policy. For all of those the Home Secretary himself stands responsible to the House of Commons.

It cannot be doubted that the prison system is inadequate to cope with the burdens placed upon it. The most recent report, issued six months ago, of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons stated:

"Overcrowding remained a major problem"

and

"The position in local prisons was grim."

It also stated that overcrowding

"seemed, at least in the short term, more likely to get worse than better."

On 11 April of this year, there were 46,687 people held in prison in England and Wales in a system normally capable of accommodating 40,832. That was 2,000 more than at the end of 1985. Because of the overcrowding, over 13,000 prisoners are being held two to a cell and over 4,000 three to a cell, most of them with no access to night sanitation. One fifth of the prison population consists of remand prisoners, some 8,000 persons innocent in law and being held for trial. Nearly 1,500 have been held in that way for six months or more.

Of course, the problems of overcrowded prisons have been with us for many years, under Governments of both parties, but it is clear that the overcrowding is getting worse. Last year, the prison population exceeded that forecast in Home Office projections for 1991. Those projections are being revised upwards all the time.

The present dispute has woken the Government up to the difficulties that loom. They have responded by making absurd mis-statements, of which we heard more this afternoon, about the position which they inherited. Last Thursday, the Prime Minister spoke wildly about what she called

"the Labour Government's neglect of prison buildings".

That same day, against the background of the previous night's debris and disturbances, the Home Secretary flailed about him even more nonsensically, talking about "the time when no money was being spent either on staff or on prisoners."—[*Official Report*, 1 May 1986; Vol. 96, c. 1097, 1114.]

I should like to know when that was. We all know that the right hon. Gentleman's grasp of fact is tenuous, but that was extraordinary even by his standards.

When Labour left office, building schemes were in progress to provide 4,100 prison places over a four-year period, with three new prisons to be started. I readily acknowledge that Lord Whitelaw boosted that programme considerably. The problem is that, although, because of him and him alone, the Government launched a major prison building programme, they did not accompany that with implementing a policy for prisons, let alone a penal policy.

Lord Whitelaw outlined the contents of a prisons policy in a debate in the House in 1980 when he said:

"First, we shall increase the capacity and efficiency of the prison service through new building, through improvements in organisation, management and industrial relations"—

yes, improvements in industrial relations—

"and through better use of manpower. Secondly,"—

this is a response to the Home Secretary's implication that this was never meant by his Government—

"we shall take measures designed to reduce the size of the prison population." — [*Official Report*, 1 August 1980; Vol. 989, 1900-1.]

That was what a thoughtful Home Secretary said on these matters. Apart from new building, little if any of what Lord Whitelaw spoke about six years ago has come about. Far from being improved, as he wished, industrial relations are as bad as they could be.

Insofar as the Government now have a policy, it is the policy stated in the 1983 Conservative party manifesto, which said that there must be enough prison places to cope with sentences imposed by the courts.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: At the present rate, even Lord Whitelaw's building programme will not achieve that. Indeed, as the *Financial Times* pointed out a couple of weeks ago, the monetary cuts entailed by what the Government call their financial management initiative will, unless the Home Secretary learns sense as a result of last week's events, turn the new prisons into "little more than human warehouses". People are being crammed into Britain's prisons in a random and unplanned way.

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I will not give way at the moment. I must move on a little.

The number of remand prisoners between 1973 and 1983 increased from 4,613 to 8,651, and they now spend an average of 47 days in custody awaiting trial, compared with 23 days in 1970. As Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons points out, facilities and services for them are "generally the poorest". Her Majesty's chief inspector said that a reduction of prisoners in this category

"would do much to relieve the problems facing the prison service".

but the Government have ignored his recommendation.

Far more of those actually tried and found guilty of offences are being sent to prison. Of males, 15 per cent. were sentenced to immediate imprisonment in 1974. By 1984, this proportion had risen to 20 per cent. In 1983, Britain proportionately imprisoned nearly twice as many as West Germany and Italy, and more than twice as many as Holland and France. Fewer than one in five of those in prison here had committed the really serious crimes involving violence, sex and robbery. In fact, in this country we imprison more people for defaulting on fines then we do for these grave offences.

What is more, as a deterrent, prison is a proven failure. The latest figures show that 58 per cent. of male offenders and 39 per cent. of female offenders were reconvicted within two years of release. For young prisoners aged 17 to 20, the figure was 69 per cent. For detention centre trainees aged 14 to 16, it was 72 per cent. for borstal trainees aged 15 to 16, it was a terrifying 80 per cent. Over 50 per cent. of all prisoners and over 70 per cent. of all young offenders have been imprisoned before. Far from deterring offenders from further crimes, custody is often preparing them to commit further crimes. To put it another way, prison is not working.

The May committee set up by my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), which reported to the present Government, said categorically:

"every effort should be made to reduce the inmate populations".

It suggested a re-examination of sentencing policy. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, in his latest report calls for

"action to reduce, first, the time people spend in custody awaiting trial and, second, the average length of sentence for non-violent offenders"

The report goes on to say:

"it seems likely that these measures would make little difference to the deterrent value of sentences generally".

It is fair to say that the more sensible members of this Government, in their more sensible moments, have echoed his view. Lord Whitelaw, drawing on the experience of the previous prison dispute when he was Home Secretary, said:

"One of the things the dispute demonstrated was that it is possible for us to survive with a much lower custodial population than before."

The present Home Secretary, before the rush of blood to his head last month, said much the same kind of thing. The problem is that they have to contend with their more atavistic colleagues, such as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who last month chose the church pulpit as his platform to say:

"I believe that sentencing has gone too far in the direction of leniency to deter crime."

The result is that there is no lead from the Government. Courts go on cramming the prisons with inmates and those who have to carry the burden of those overcrowded prisons are the prison officers.

The Home Secretary—he did it again this afternoon—offering the only set of statistics that he knows, with the Prime Minister echoing him, implied that it is all all right because, under their Government, the number of inmates has increased by 12 per cent. while the number of officers has increased by 18 per cent. But that glib juxtaposition ignores the fact that the prison officers carry a much greater burden because so many more thousands of the inmates are on remand, and remand prisoners require extra time and attention.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons explains it very well in his latest report, when he says:

"All these problems were exacerbated by the drain on resources caused by court escort commitments".

Her Majesty's chief inspector goes on to state bleakly:

"Failure to take action will make it increasingly difficult to resist demands for more and ever costlier prison places with the inevitable concomitant of more staff".

It is the cost of the staff, however, that is the real problem, for the Prime Minister slipped up when trying out another statistic last Thursday. At Question Time she claimed that this Government

"have increased spending on the prison service by 85 per cent. in real terms".—[*Official Report*, 1 May 1986; Vol. 96, c. 1097.]

But she got it completely wrong. The fact is that this increase is not in real terms, it is in cash terms. The increase in real terms, as the Home Secretary admitted this afternoon, is much less than half what the Prime Minister claimed it to be. And, of course, the true figure is at the heart of the crisis that led to last Wednesday's disturbances.

The Prime Minister and the Home Secretary can bandy about all the rigged statistics they like, but they still cannot explain why the prison officers voted by 81 per cent. last month to take industrial action, a massive majority in a group of public servants whom, in any other circumstances, the Prime Minister would be the first to applaud to the skies.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Will the right hon. Gentleman agree that the prison officers that he knows, and certainly those in my constituency, are absolutely incensed by the articles in *The Sun* last Friday, which painted a totally wrong picture of prison officers and their wives?

Mr. Kaufman: Unfortunately, I do not read *The Sun* so I cannot share the ugly experience which the hon. Gentleman's correspondents have undergone. What I can say is that I have received in the post since this controversy began a considerable number of letters from prison officers which show the facts, some of which I shall try to give to the House, about the problems that they face in doing their work.

Of course, the prison officers know very well that the new type of budgetary regime for their service means that

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the Government seek to claim every possible credit for the prison building programme while, at the same time, cutting the prison officers' overall earnings in order to help pay for that programme. That is why the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary have launched their discreditable smear campaign against the prison officers, accusing them of swindling the taxpayers through corrupt practices, in order artificially to boost their overtime.

Mr. Hurd: Neither in what I have said today nor in what I have said previously on the matter have I used the word "corrupt" or the word "swindle". I do not believe that either word is in the least relevant to the point that I am making, which is that the prison service is handicapped and hamstrung by a whole lot of practices which prevent us from making proper use of the staff employed.

Mr. Kaufman: I will come to that, but it is a fact that the right hon. Gentleman and the Prime Minister have taken every possible opportunity to talk about the high earnings of prison officers and that the press have been carefully and consistently briefed about the Spanish practices which, it is alleged, are rife among prison officers. If the Home Secretary is saying that he no longer believes that, if he repudiates those unpleasant stories about prison officers, that will help a great deal to clear the air.

But I shall say this much. It may be that a minority of prison officers do exploit the opportunities for overtime, but the fact is that the prison system would break down instantly if sufficient prison officers did not work overtime. That was incontrovertibly proved last Wednesday.

Mr. Corbett: My right hon. Friend talked about Spanish customs. Has he heard allegations that a governor of one prison is involved in the running of his wife's antique business and that a governor of another prison was absent from the prison during a visit by Her Majesty's chief inspector because he was putting a roof on somebody's house for payment?

Mr. Kaufman: I had not heard of that either and I would be unwilling to think anything but the best of prison governors, but if my hon. Friend provides evidence, we shall have to accept it.

The reliance of the prisons on overtime working by prison staffs would have been demonstrated with incalculable consequences for public order if the prison officers had continued their overtime ban over the May bank holiday weekend. That is not because the officers have distorted the system to squeeze overtime out of it, although it is true that on a maximum basic rate of £135·34 a week after 15 years' service a prison officer taking home only basic pay could have difficulty in making ends meet.

The predicament was stated less hysterically and more accurately than by the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary in the annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons. He said:

"All the establishments we inspected in 1984 were short of their authorised complement of staff. This in part explains the high levels of overtime that were still being worked . . . and since overtime is now voluntary, governors are, to this extent at least, dependent on the goodwill of their staff for the functioning of the establishment."

It was the Home Secretary's orders to governors which led to the trampling on that good will and which in its turn nurtured the ill-feeling that led to last week's disturbances. The Home Secretary and the Prime Minister have, in connection with this dispute, been mouthing the slogan that management must have the right to manage. But Her Majesty's chief inspector's chapter on prison staff, which I recommend hon. Members to read, makes it clear that it is management that has been misusing the power to manage. That there is too much overtime among prison officers is indisputable, but the Home Secretary's steps to deal with the problem have made the situation worse.

The signatories of the May report said flatly:

"We consider that it is in the long run undesirable for efficient working to be dependent on the excessive amounts of overtime."

But its solution was certainly not the Government's solution—to stretch the prison officers on the bed of Procrustes and hack away. The report said:

"Ultimate manpower levels should be such that overtime is substantially reduced and, ideally, removed altogether."

It warned:

"We fully recognise the sensitivity of staff to some of the possible effects (for example on their earnings) of changes in these areas. Management should therefore display real tact and understanding as well as determination in dealing with them."

That was the May report, whose recommendations the Prime Minister claimed the Government had fulfilled in full.

The management certainly showed determination, but their version of tact and understanding would have brought discredit on a flat-footed elephant. The Government failed to recognise the sensitivity to which the May report referred. They showed little or no understanding of the strain on prison officers of their difficult and dangerous job.

That strain was described best in a letter to the Home Secretary, a copy of which was sent to me on the other day. It was written by Mrs. P. A. Kelly of Market Harborough, the widow of a prison officer. She said:

"Dear Mr. Hurd, Ref: Prison officers. Two weeks ago my husband died, he was 51 years old. A heart attack and various other medical terms all leading from the heart attack was the cause. He was a conscientious prison officer for 30 years. Only three more years and we could look forward to doing all the things couples plan to do when they retire—but not any more. I blame the long hours and the tension—a life of 80 per cent. prison, and 20 per cent. home life. When I hear on the media the rates of pay, the rates of overtime, I think of the husband I loved and have lost—I think of other officers who have died—what price your pay and your overtime. For once in my Tory life I agree with the Labour M.P. Gerald Kaufman"——

[Interruption.]——

"who said, 'Avoid turning our jails into tinderboxes'. Think of the men who run our prisons every day—they are the ones that know—for Gods sake—PLEASE LISTEN."

That is a letter from the widow of a prison officer. It was men among whom there existed that kind of experience—*[Interruption.]* I am interested in the way that Conservative Members deride and jeer at that—and background who, three weeks ago, came to the end of their tether and voted 81 per cent. for industrial action, not over pay but over those very manning levels about which Her Majesty's chief inspector and the May committee had warned. In voting under their own rules as well as the Government's legislation, they were, if they will forgive me for saying so, behaving like perfect Thatcherites, because it was the Prime Minister who two years ago on 12 April—about another dispute, of course—said:

"it is important to have a ballot as quickly as possible, especially when that facility is in the union's constitution."—[*Official Report*, 12 April 1984; Vol. 58, c. 523.]

The prison officers held their ballot and it was in their constitution. They did what the Prime Minister said they should do. Seventy-eight per cent. of their total voted, and they voted 81 per cent. for action. The only problem with the Government is that they were in favour of a ballot but against the members acting on what they had voted for. Yet instead of seeking to reach a sensible solution, the Home Secretary issued an ultimatum to the prison officers. He called on them to abandon their industrial action and insisted that, unless they did so, there would be no more talks. This self-proclaimed arbiter of the rule of law ignored—although he claims that he knew about it—a crucial obstacle. The Prison Officers Association was and is required by a High Court ruling to ballot its members before it can abandon this industrial action. It needs a package to put before its members in such a ballot. What the Home Secretary demanded was not a settlement but a surrender.

The Home Secretary sent a letter to all staff and governors saying that no further talks could take place

"against a background of industrial action."

Lord Glenarthur, the junior Minister in charge of prisons, voiced that intransigence with damning precision when he proclaimed:

"All the Home Secretary asked was that the Prison Officers Association call off industrial action so that these discussions could go ahead. They have refused to do this, offering only to instruct their members to take no further action while talks are going on . . . we cannot talk under threat."

The Home Secretary, exactly a week ago from the Dispatch Box, said:

"The Government cannot conduct talks under the continuing threat of further industrial action in this vital public service . . . I am sure that discussions can only fruitfully take place if the POA calls off industrial action."—[*Official Report*, 29 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 797-9.]

Two days before that, I had called on the Home Secretary to take action to end the dispute. I had warned that the prisons were

"a potential tinderbox, waiting for the spark that could set them alight."

A week ago, with the situation more critical than ever, I used similar words, this time in the House. I said:

"I warn the Home Secretary that with his intransigent bungling in this exceptionally delicate area he is recklessly playing with fire."

The Home Secretary's only response was a weary sigh of aloof disdain, yet the very next day the fires broke out.

When the fires broke out, they were soon almost out of control. One prison was almost completely destroyed. Prisoners escaped, and the Home Secretary announced this afternoon that some of them are still at large. The Home Office could not cope, yet last week, when I asked the Home Secretary about the contingency plans prepared for this eventuality many months ago by the Association of Chief Police Officers, he said sniffily:

"Of course there are contingency plans."—[*Official Report*, 29 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 798-9.]

Three weeks ago, when the Prison Officers Association ballot result was announced, the right hon. Gentleman said —reassuringly, so it seemed, but complacently in the light of later events—

"The Government are prepared and will respond vigorously as necessary. In doing so, we shall have the safety of the public and the security of prisons as our first concerns."—[*Official Report*, 17 April 1986; Vol. 95, c. 1009.]

Yet he was not prepared. The prisons burned. Some prisoners rioted; others escaped. Public safety was not secure.

In the light of his firm promises and failure to honour them, the Home Secretary should carefully consider whether he should remain in office.

The question of the Home Secretary's fitness to continue arises most sharply in his handling of the dispute. The evidence lies in the right hon. Gentleman's statements. Last Thursday, the afternoon after the night before, the Home Secretary said:

"Although some of the violent action by prisoners may have been imitative, there is little doubt that the occasion for it was the overtime ban instituted by the national executive committee of the Prison Officers Association as part of its dispute about manning levels with the Prison Department."

The Home Secretary was sure that the overtime ban was to blame for the riots—but who was to blame for the overtime ban?

Throughout the dispute, the Prison Officers Association declared that it was ready to suspend industrial action in exchange for talks. Throughout, the Home Secretary rejected that offer and demanded the complete abandonment of industrial action before he would talk, even though he now admits that he knew that abandonment was not possible for the POA, since he acknowledges that the POA must ballot to abandon its industrial action and that such a ballot takes 12 days. The POA asked for an end to selective dismissal of its members as a sign of good will on the part of the Home Office. The Home Office flatly refused, and as recently as last Thursday, after the riots, all that the Home Secretary could bleakly say was that the suspended staff

"can lift their own suspension by agreeing to work normally."

That empty offer meant that the staff had to sign a declaration promising to work normally.

Mr. Hurd *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Kaufman: That is what the Prison Officers Association tells me. If the right hon. Gentleman contradicts it, all that I can say is that, up to a couple of hours ago, it was certainly the belief of the POA.

The POA promised to instruct its members to take no further action while talks were continuing and it asked for an end to suspension of its members. The Home Secretary said no to both. As recently as last Thursday, he was insisting

"We cannot start substantive negotiations until the threat of industrial action has been removed."—[*Official Report*, 1 May 1986; Vol. 96, c. 1110-1.]

Since then, the POA, as it had always offered to do, suspended industrial action, but it did not, as it could not —even though the Home Secretary had demanded it— remove the threat of industrial action without the prolonged process of a ballot. It could have complied with the Home Secretary's demands only by breaking its rules and defying the High Court. I cannot believe that that is what the Home Secretary wanted, but that was his demand.

Last Friday, the Home Secretary reinstated the 100 prison officers who had been suspended—an action for which the POA had asked and which he had previously refused. He agreed to table fresh proposals on manning levels—an action which he had previously refused to contemplate while industrial action was still in prospect. Tomorrow, he—either he personally or his officials— will get round his ultimatum by holding talks which the Home Office declined to call negotiations.

[Mr. Kaufman]

That they will be negotiations is made clear by a statement from Mr. Colin Steel, the chairman of the POA. After Friday's talks, he said:

"We have got to go back to the members. One would hope that by the time we get to that position, it will be a formality. We hope we will have a package that will be suitable."

Mr. Hurd: I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the procedural talks now continuing are taking place exactly on the basis of the suggestion I made in the House on Thursday afternoon. I dealt with suspension and with how discussions would be resumed. I am glad that, despite the right hon. Gentleman's efforts at obfuscation, those procedural suggestions were accepted and what has happened since then to improve the position has happened on that basis.

Mr. Kaufman: Last Thursday afternoon, the Home Secretary said — he can check his words — that the suspended prison officers could unsuspend themselves. What has happened is that he has formally removed suspension from them, which is very different. The Home Secretary said repeatedly in the House and elsewhere that he would not enter into talks with the Prison Officers Association on substantive matters until it abandoned— not suspended — it industrial action. It has not abandoned that industrial action. It cannot do so without a ballot. It has done what it always said it would do— suspended its industrial action. Nevertheless, substantive talks are taking place and will take place tomorrow, despite the Home Secretary's statement that talks could not take place without the action being abandoned.

The fact that the action has not been abandoned is confirmed by what Mr. Steel said:

"We have got to go back to the members. One would hope that by the time we get to that position, it will be a formality. We hope we will have a package that will be suitable."

Such a package is impossible to achieve without genuine negotiations, whatever the Home Secretary chooses to call them to save his face. As the *Daily Telegraph* generously put it, discussing the suspensions and negotiations:

"There appears to have been a compromise on both these points."

The Home Secretary has rightly climbed down. But why did there have to be riots before he could see sense? If he had only behaved in this way last Tuesday instead of last Friday, there would have been no overtime ban and, on the Secretary of State's analysis, there would have been no riots. The riots were the consequences of the Home Secretary's intransigent bungling. He has drawn back from the edge of the abyss, but that we ever reached the edge of the abyss is his doing. I very much hope that tomorrow's talks will result in a sensible end to the dispute, but after those talks the Home Secretary would do well to consider not only what he has done but what he should do.

The reason for the overcrowding of our prisons and for the grim scenes that we witnessed last week can be found in the record crime wave from which the country is suffering under this Government. The pressure of the crime wave on overstretched police forces has meant that the crime clear-up rate has fallen to only 35 per cent. Even so, the increase in crime and criminals means extra pressure on the prison service, especially since there have been disturbing increases in the worst crimes, involving violence, sex and robbery. The prisons are buckling under the weight of the crime wave.

In a stern leading article, the *Financial Times* was clear about where the responsibility lies. It stated:

"There could be few more pointed indictments of a Tory administration that came to office seven years ago determined to do something about law and order. Not only has crime continued to rise; the prisons are overflowing and now even the prison officers are rebelling against their terms of service."

Those ugly and financially expensive prison riots will have served one constructive purpose, if, from now on, we are spared the Government's sloganising on law and order.

No Government have ever come to office with more lavish and extavagant promises about upholding law and order; no Government have ever presided over such a disturbing decline in law and order. From dangerous streets to dangerous prisons, that is the grim legacy that this failed Government will leave to their successors.

5.40 pm

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde): No Government have ever come into office and not only promised, but fulfilled, a prison-building programme that is without comparison this century. No Government have ever come into office with a Home Secretary who has shown, as my right hon. Friend has shown, such sensitivity and understanding and an ability to deal with the appalling problems now being presented in our prisons.

There are two hard nuts which my right hon. Friend must crack. The difficulties that he faces are formidable, and no one could envy him his task. The first difficulty is the current dispute between management and the Prison Officers Association. I can at least agree with the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in hoping that tomorrow will see the conclusion of the dispute.

The central issue has been the question of who has the right to manage — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I shall express it in more neutral terms if Opposition Members would find that more acceptable. One of the main issues has been the question of who should have the right to manage. The other issue that attends upon that is whether we can afford the inefficiencies currently to be found in the prison service.

My right hon. Friend referred to a management consultant's report. I have not seen the report, and I doubt whether other hon. Members have seen it. However, over the weekend it was reported that £60 million a year, out of a total and record budget of £639 million, is being wasted through inefficiency. Clearly we cannot afford to allow such a loss to continue. We hope to find a way of dealing with each of the sources of loss, whether it be bad management, restrictive practices or overlapping shifts. Whatever the cause, we must deal with it.

I hope that some good will come out of what happened last week. I hope that the discussions between the Government and the POA will range wider than these narrow but important issues. I, like many other hon. Members, have spoken to prison officers over the years, and they have consistently told us of their dissatisfaction with the unappreciative attitude of the public and the Government of the day towards their duties. There is no doubt that prison officers do a most unattractive and difficult job, looking after some of the most dangerous criminals in conditions that are a positive invitation to violence.

I do not want to make a party political point in putting forward a suggestion which I hope will be considered by both the Government and the POA. It is my personal view that it would be of benefit to the POA, the Government, the prison service and the country as a whole if, during the forthcoming talks, consideration was given to the possibility of a no-strike agreement. Such an agreement would, I believe, enhance and increase the status of prison officers. It could be arranged on terms beneficial to them.

I realise that time is short and will deal briefly with the second problem that my right hon. Friend faces, which is overcrowding in our prisons. Unhappily, there is no prospect of that problem being solved merely by the solving of the current dispute. Overcrowding in our prisons is gross and creates intolerable conditions. The sad fact is that, because of what happened last Wednesday night, more than 800 invaluable prison places have been destroyed. We must therefore consider what remedies are available to deal with overcrowding.

The first and obvious remedy is one which the Government have pursued with great vigour, and backed with a great deal of capital—the building of new prisons and the modernisation of old prisons. However, that is not sufficient to deal with the problem. There is no doubt that thousands of people in prison today should not be there. I want to discuss one specific group only, which is prisoners on remand awaiting trial, and of whom there are about 7,000 at present. If we could remove them from our prisons, that would go a long way towards solving the overcrowding. However, I accept that that might be too ambitious. Perhaps we could aim to halve their number.

The Select Committee on Home Affairs has recommended a way to achieve such a reduction, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend on adopting it. It is that an immediate experiment be carried out in our courts along the lines of the system in Scottish law, where people awaiting trial are detained in prison for a statutory period only. In Scotland the period is 110 days, but it may have to be either longer or shorter in England and Wales for administrative reasons. The sooner we can reach a conclusion on adopting that proposal, the better.

When we consider the problem of our prisons and the overcrowding, the questions which must be uppermost in our minds are what is the purpose of our prisons? What is the value of our prisons? Why do we put people in them? We used to answer confidently that we punish by imprisonment and deter others from committing the same type of crime. We could say that we reformed people in prison. We cannot say that any longer. What possible hope have we of reforming prisoners considering the present conditions in which they are kept? It is unrealistic.

The real purpose and value of our prisons is to protect the public from criminals who have committed crimes involving violence and who are therefore a danger to society. That is the paramount aim of imprisonment. The Select Committee on Home Affairs is about to start a major inquiry into our prisons. We shall take into account the valuable papers which have been produced by the all party penal affairs committee. We intend to go to America to study, though not necessarily to follow, the way in which the penal system operates there. I hope that when the committee has finished its report—I hope by Christmas—we shall be able to present to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary recommendations which may be valuable to him and of value to the prison service.

5.51 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I commend the hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) on his approach. In my latter months as Home Secretary, in the run-up to the general election, we should have had such sensible discussions, but in those days it was all about law and order and locking people up.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, this debate arises out of what happened last week. Nobody could have been amused or got any political pleasure out of what was seen on television last week. The increasing crime rate is no respecter of general elections, of political rhetoric, of over-simplification, such as short, sharp shocks — I wonder what happened to that — or of over-simplification in the press. The press, at its very best, is good, but most of it is not the slightest bit interested in discussions on the matter. It prefers simplification.

I especially regret yesterday's *Sunday Express* leader, which castigated prison officers as third rate. I wish whoever wrote that had been in a prison. I wish that person had visited the wives of prison officers in Northern Ireland, prison officers who risk their lives. Last night, we saw on television that those who work in the prisons in Northern Ireland are being affected in their homes—presumably by those who are normally in favour of law and order. Over-simplification gets us nowhere.

The problems of the prisons go back a long time, and they are no respectors of general election dates. The problems will exist after the next general election. The argument is about what will be done.

One of the problems is the size of the prison population. I commend community service, which was started in the days of the Heath Government and has been expanded. I commend intermediate treatment and the changes in parole, although marginal, made by the previous Home Secretary. I commend the work done by voluntary workers. The work carried out by the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) in this respect is commendable. I shall not touch on the question of remand, which is a major issue. The only way to proceed is radically to cut the size of the prison population.

In Northern Ireland, because there was no public disagreement, we were able to introduce 50 per cent. remission. There is no parole in Northern Ireland. We decided to end detention because we had no prison accommodation. The Army built the H blocks and we had to get people into them and other prison accommodation.

There had to be a radical cut in the size of the prison population. That was easier to implement in Northern Ireland than elsewhere. The judges in Northern Ireland know what is going on. There is no establishment—with a small "e"—to say, "Oh, no, this will upset people." Therefore, the Labour Government introduced the 50 per cent. remission system. Prisoners had to have a record of good behaviour, or else they were not brought into the scheme. Those who offended again went before a judge, and, if the judge so willed, they had to serve the unexpired part of their sentence.

Why did I not do that here? The rest of the United Kingdom is a different place. My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) put it to me firmly that it would look daft. Others also put it firmly that, in the run-up to the general election, we would be crucified on law and order. The Conservatives had said that law and

[Mr. Merlyn Rees]

order would be the policy of a Conservative Government. It was made clear to me that the judiciary would not support what I was doing. If I had introduced the scheme, the tariff would have gone up to match the 50 per cent.

Something of that nature must be done. I recomend to hon. Members the findings of the May report. I am sure that the Home Secretary and the Minister have read it. I set up the committee in December 1978 and it reported to Lord Whitelaw. I do not have the time to run through the recommendations, but they deal with the imprisonment of the mentally disordered, suggest that prison should be avoided for fine and maintenance defaulters and drinkers, and deal with persisent petty offenders. My wife is chairman of a bench and we discuss what should happen to persistent petty offenders. It is no good saying that they should be left alone. In most cases, after the first time they have been put inside, prison is a waste of time. They are filling prison space and it costs money. Because of time, I will not consider the May report further, but it tends to be ignored as time goes on.

The problems in the prisons have already been mentioned. I have a book entitled "The Prison Crisis" by Peter Evans of *The Times* with a foreword by Sir Robert Mark. That book, which was written in 1980, was sparked off by the May committee report.

The problems in the prisons are not new, but they are worse. As Home Secretary, I was careful not to stand up in the House of Commons and say that the situation could not explode in my face. It may well have done.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): The right hon. Gentleman is discussing the problems in the prisons. Why was the annual capital building programme for prisons 20 per cent. less in real terms when he left office than when he took office?

Mr. Rees: The hon. Gentleman should have listened to my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton. It was not cut in my time. I went to the Treasury and told the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the civil servants that they could run the prison service themselves. It would be a good idea if the Treasury tried to run the prisons. The junior Minister is wrong, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton showed him to be wrong. He should not be so clever——

Mr. Mellor *rose*——

Mr. Rees: No; I shall not give way again.

When the May committee reported, I commended Lord Whitelaw for approving a 20 per cent. pay increase for prison officers in 1979 and a further 20 per cent. later. I commend the new prisons, as long as they are intended to replace old ones and are not used to deal with those who commit the list of offences that I have just mentioned.

What has happened to May's recommendations concerning the role of prison officers? The report said that the desire expressed by prison officers to extend their role and to undertake a wider range of duties should be encouraged. I am a member of the Butler Trust, which was set up in memory of "Rab" Butler. Only a few months ago, the work done by people in the prison service was recognised.

The role of prison officers has changed, but if we treat prison officers as turnkeys they will act like turnkeys. One of the problems of prison officers is to increase and professionalise their role. As for recruitment and training, is it still true that training is neither as effective nor as comprehensive as it should be and that, at all levels, it is not given sufficient priority?

There were complicated recommendations concerning pay and allowances, which only those involved in the Prison Department or the prison service understand. What has happened to them? The dependence on overtime has increased.

The May report says that prison officers should have access to the central arbitration tribunal. Has that been done? Is it a possibility now? What has happened?

I was glad to hear the hon. and learned Member for Fylde say that the Select Committee on Home Affairs is to examine prisons and their organisation. I am all in favour of examining prison reform, but not enough thought has been given, outside the Prison Department, which is a very good Department, to running prisons. That was the purpose of the May report. We drew up the committee's terms of reference with that in mind. I hope that its report will again be discussed publicly.

I wish the Home Secretary and the Prison Officers Association well in their meeting next Wednesday. That ought to be the beginning. There will be prison crises as long as prison officers, prison governors, the Prison Department and whoever is Home Secretary have to pretend that we can keep the cork in the bottle. They will not be able to do that. Perhaps we shall have a sensible discussion of the matter in the next general election campaign. But that may be too much to hope for.

6.3 pm

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham): It amazes me that there is any surprise that the events of the past week or so have happened. Those of us who have been closely associated with the prison service, the after-care service and other off-shoots have been aware for years that this was brewing. There is nothing new about it—we had prison disruptions in 1974 and 1979.

I am sure that my right hon. friend the Home Secretary has realised that there can be no delay, and that action must be taken to correct critical problems. The cost of the damage done in the disruptions would have contributed substantially to enabling prison officers to carry out their work.

The events of the past week have shown how dangerously close our prison system is to collapse. The dispute takes place against a background of a record number of people — 48,000 — in prison, gross overcrowding of cells and restrictions on work education and association. In that respect, our prisons are an international as well as a national scandal. No other civilised country has such an appalling record.

The Government have chosen to try to end overcrowding by a large prison building programme involving 16 new prisons at a cost of £350 million. So far, however, new prison places have provided no real relief for overcrowded local prisons and the disgraceful circumstances in remand centres. As fast as new prisons have opened, the courts have filled them with more prisoners.

I remember making a speech on this very subject in 1979, when I urged the then Home Secretary to ensure that one old prison shut as one new prison opened. Precisely what many of us feared has come about. Even before the

dispute, the Home Secretary acknowledged that last year's especially sharp rise in the prison population had jeopardised the Government's hopes of eliminating overcrowding when the current building programme was complete. During the difficulties of the past week, more than 800 places have been lost, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) said.

Everybody agrees that serious and violent offenders must be imprisoned to protect the public, but we should bear in mind the fact that eight out of 10 of those who we imprison are non-violent offenders. Although some might have committed serious non-violent offences, many have committed relatively minor offences and could perfectly well be dealt with by the many non-custodial measures which are becoming available and which could be substantially increased if the funding was made available.

With an overall reconviction rate of about 60 per cent. —it is even higher for young offenders—our over-use of prisons makes no sense from a penological point of view. All of this is at a cost of more than £256 a week to keep an offender in prison. It makes sense neither from a humanitarian point of view nor from an economic one.

It is ironic that the Home Office is castigating prison officers for wasting relatively limited amounts on unnecessary overtime and ignoring the much larger amounts of taxpayers' money that is being spent on providing new prisons to accommodate ever more prisoners who have been given unnecessary custodial sentences. Last week the parliamentary all-party penal affairs group published a report entitled "The Rising Prison Population", which contains a ten-point programme of proposals to reduce the use of prison. We are sick to death of producing reports, we are tired of hearing learned papers being discussed, while nothing is done. This is how strongly we are beginning to feel. Many of the proposals in the report, which I am sure the Home Secretary will find an opportunity to read, would go a long way to reduce the likelihood that last week's harrowing events will ever be repeated.

This unhappy dispute centres partly on the right to set manning levels within individual prisons. Nobody disputes the right of management to manage, but when the exercise of that right brings anarchy, destruction and danger to life and property, the nature of the management's decision must and should be questioned.

Let us think generally of the situation with regard to pay. Prison officers' pay—let us face it and be honest about it—is far too low for the difficult, isolated and dangerous work that they do. They are not, as we used to term them, warders; they are professional prison officers. The earnings of prison officers are made up to a reasonable level only by overtime—excessive, in my view—that they would prefer not to do if they received a decent rate of pay.

To refresh our memories, officers start at £5,300—hardly a king's ransom—and rise after 15 years to £7,000 or just over. However, for decades Home Office and prison authorities fostered this excessive overtime as a means of keeping the prison system running and keeping staff numbers under control. Given the gross overcrowding of our current prison system and the grave warnings of impending disaster made clear by prison inspectors, governors and independent bodies, it seems a most inopportune time to go into a sudden reversal on the issue of overtime.

It would be a gross injustice to prison officers and prisoners alike if the effects of this management decision were drastically to reduce prison officers' earnings. Indeed, it would cause a great deal more trouble. As any competent manager knows, every change or reorganisation requires a substantial investment. The prison system is no different.

To bring our prison system back from the brink of anarchy and to establish it as a reasonably humane system, we need action, and swift action, on the following fronts: a substantial increase in prison officers' basic pay, elimination of restrictive practices, less concentration on the purely security role of prison officers—they are no longer simply turnkeys — safe manning levels and a large reduction in the population of non-violent offenders.

I am grateful to have had this chance to make a short contribution to this important debate. I know that many other hon. Members wish to speak. It is unfortunate to have this short debate on a matter of such importance. I hope that the House and the public at large will give overwhelming support to some of the points that have been raised on both sides of the House.

6.14 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I agree with almost every word uttered by the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving). I hope that the Home Secretary was listening and that the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department in replying to the debate will answer the points that were made, because in the opening speech there was singularly little recognition of the long-term problem that confronts the prisons in this country today. We heard of the occasion of the dispute, and very little of the causes of the dispute.

The Home Secretary has sometimes paid lip service to the pressures under which the prison service is operating. In a speech to the prison governors on 5 November last he said:

> "You have kept the system going while it was being stretched to the outer limits of its capacity in physical and human terms".

The right hon. Gentleman shows little recognition today —or, indeed showed in his utterances last week when he sought to explain his position — of the strain in human terms faced by prison officers.

Having said that, I want to look mostly at the longer-term issues, which I believe the Government have not addressed. Indeed, the Home Secretary again today ducked the whole question of the frequency and duration of custodial sentences. In dealing with this issue, he said that he felt it was not appropriate—I paraphrase for brevity—to interfere with the role of the judiciary and sought, I believe, to misrepresent the position of those who feel that we in this country are badly out of line on sentencing policy and, as a result, have far too many people in prison for too long.

Let us look at the results. The right hon. Gentleman spoke of the neglect of the prison buildings in the previous decade. The fact is that the prison population in the early 1970s was rising at a much slower rate than it is now. In the 1970s, the prison population was rising annually at the rate of 0·8 per cent. Since his Government took office, it has been rising by 1·4 per cent. per annum. His own Department's projections are that this trend will continue, and in the next decade it is anticipated that the prison population will rise by 2·7 per cent. per annum.

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

The consequences are appalling not only for prison officers but for prison inmates, many of whom in this country must be regarded as subject to conditions that are degrading and inhuman within the terms of article 3 of the European convention on human rights. Three particular categories at least are suffering unacceptably. The first category is those on remand. In England the Home Secretary has shown himself, I believe, to be dilatory in dealing with this problem. The experimentation has been going on for too long. Action is needed to get these people before the courts. It may be that the Lord Chancellor's Department is partially responsible for the deployment of our judicial resources, and it falls to him particularly to deal with the Crown courts. The need to take a lesson from the Scottish system is imperative.

There is also the question of fine defaulters. It is absurd and ineffective to imprison so many fine defaulters as are being imprisoned today. There is the question of imprisonment for petty offences, of which the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) and the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) spoke. I think that the time has come for Parliament to grasp the nettle, to recognise that we must legislate out of existence the custodial response to certain offences; to remove that option.

In practice, some Departments have decriminalised certain offences — notably the Inland Revenue, which tends to pursue its claims in the civil courts rather than to prosecute. It has at least as good a rate of recovery by so doing than by prosecuting.

Responsibility does not lie only with Parliament and the Government. It must be recognised that something is going seriously wrong in our courts. In 1980, the Court of Appeal expressed its view forcefully and clearly when it stated:

"It is no secret that our prisons at the moment are dangerously overcrowded, so much so that sentencing courts must be particularly careful to examine each case to ensure that if a minimum custodial sentence is necessary, sentences are as short as possible and consistent only with the duties to protect the interests of the public and to punish and deter the criminal. Many offenders can be dealt with equally justly and effectively by a sentence of six months' or nine months' imprisonment as by one of eighteen months or three years. What the court can and should do is ask itself whether there is any compelling reason why a short sentence should not be passed."

Notwithstanding the guidance from the Court of Appeal, the Home Office has reported that the recent increase in the prison population has been

"mainly due to a larger number of offenders being dealt with by the Crown court and a large proportion of them being given a custodial sentence. There is also some evidence towards the end of 1984 of an increase in the length of custodial sentences being imposed by the Crown court for some types of offences, which may be a contributory factor."

The Home Secretary took the opportunity today to remind the House of the need for custodial sentences in cases of violence and those of drug trafficking; no one in the House would dissent from that. However, the right hon. Gentleman has not taken the opportunity to talk about the decriminalisation, which has been recommended by Justice, the British branch of the International Commission of Jurists, of many of the 7,000 offences that are called criminal. He has not taken the opportunity to recognise that Parliament and Government set the framework within which judges have to pass sentences and that the judiciary has to take the lead from those who are elected to set the sentencing framework.

The Home Secretary is looking puzzled, either because he is hoping that I shall say something that interferes with what he calls the discretion of the judiciary or because he is not prepared to respond to these matters. The right hon. Gentleman would do well to realise that the problems which exploded last week will recur if he does not tackle the underlying difficulties. He may shuffle off his responsibilities to a successor but the problems will not be dealt with merely by the prison building programme. That programme is necessary to replace existing antiquated and unacceptable prisons, apart from meeting the growing prison population. What the right hon. Gentleman should be examining, and what he said nothing about, are the alternatives to custodial treatment.

Mr. Hurd *rose*——

Mr. Maclennan: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Hurd: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman did not listen to my speech.

Mr. Maclennan: I listened to it with great care and I made careful notes.

I am extremely disappointed that the right hon. Gentleman did not touch on the shortage of day care centres. He did not touch upon the possibilities of expanding intermediate treatment. He did not touch on bail verification schemes and other desirable replacements for custodial treatment. He did not deal with these matters with the seriousness that they deserve. He and the Home Office have shown less than sufficient enthusiasm for the options to custody for too long; the consequence is the appalling breakdown of law and order in the prisons, which was brought home to us last week.

It is right that manning levels must be determined by the prison service, by the prison management. That means that decisions cannot be taken by anyone else. However, if prison officers are to be regarded as part of a professional body—that must be the objective—it is only right that they should be closely involved in consultation. It is right that their status should be enhanced, that their basic pay should be increased and that the appalling industrial relations example which the Home Secretary gave last week, should not be repeated.

I hope that the talks that will take place tomorrow will be fruitful and that, as a result of recent bitter experience, there will be a more professional attitude among the wilder elements of the prisoner officers. I hope that the proper aspirations of the members of the Prison Officers Association will be met and that they will continue to provide a service under less trying conditions than they have had to endure for some time.

6.26 pm

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk (Knowsley, North): The events of last week caused a great deal of hardship and anxiety to prisoners, who saw a deterioration in the already poor prison regime; to those who were refused access to prisons and had to endure the appalling conditions of police and court cells; to those prisoners who were intimidated, threatened or beaten by other prisoners because of the prison officers' lack of or abdication of control over the prisons; to prisoners' relatives, who were refused visits; and to local residents, who were concerned

about the reports of riots and breakouts and were naturally apprehensive about their own safety. In those circumstances, the decision of the Prison Officers Association to suspend industrial action is to be commended, whatever the rights and wrongs of the issue.

The Home Secretary said again this afternoon that the trigger that set off the industrial action was the prison officers' claim to be able to negotiate safe manning levels and the right hon. Gentleman's insistence that while he would consult he reserved the right for management to manage and to determine appropriate staffing levels. That attitude is proper and acceptable, and with good will, sensitivity and patience on both sides the dispute could have been resolved. The response of David Evans, the general secretary of the POA, to the Home Secretary's letter of 27 April seemed to suggest that agreement on that issue had been arrived at, or at least was near. Local action seemed to undermine that.

That is not the real issue, however, and it is not the issue that we are debating. The real issue, as the Home Secretary has made clear, and as the Prime Minister reiterated in her letter to the prison governors, is the Government's determination to eradicate what they see as excessive overtime and waste in the prison service.

No one, including the POA, prison officers, the prison service and the Labour movement, will do anyone any favours by pretending that there are not abuses of the overtime system and that there are not restrictive practices which should be eliminated. There are several abuses of working practices and the overtime system, and these relate to escort duties, the shift system, weekend workings at overtime rates and the insistence of prison officers that they escort prisoners to education classes and workshops. There are abuses, and they need to be dealt with effectively, but that is not to say that they can be dealt with by the method adopted by the Home Secretary.

The present practices have existed and have been tolerated by successive Governments, and the present Government have tolerated them for the past seven years. Weak management has allowed prison officers to veto several proposals for penal reform, whether it be the abolition of censorship or the installation of pay telephones in category C prisons. Weak management and ineffective Home Office control have not only tolerated, but have encouraged many of the practices that the Home Secretary now wishes to eradicate.

Such practices cannot be eradicated by suddenly holding a pistol to the POA's head. Those practices must be removed over a long period of time through patient negotiation. They must be part of a package that is concerned with improving the pay, working conditions and esteem of prison officers, as well as with increasing their numbers. They must also be attached to a package that includes a substantial reduction in the prison population.

It would be remiss of us to talk about the dispute or the issues surrounding it without placing it within that context. That is the context in which the dispute has arisen. The Home Secretary affects that the problem is new. His naive, simplistic approach that all those who propose solutions to the excessive increase in the prison population wish merely to inhibit the discretion enjoyed by the judiciary is a deliberate misreading of the situation.

Today, the prison population is at a record level. There are 47,000 prisoners in certified normal accommodation for 40,000. More than one third of our prisoners are required to live two or three to a cell that was built for one in Victorian times. They are locked up for 23 hours out of every 24, and are denied proper access to work, education and recreation facilities and, moreover, are denied access to decent sanitation. They live in conditions that make a mockery of the prison service's stated aim to help prisoners to lead a good and useful life. Their conditions deny any notion of minimal standards of human decency and contravene minimum internationally agreed standards for the treatment of prisoners. The dispute, and the tensions and difficulties encountered by prison officers, must be seen in that context.

The problem is not new. The Home Secretary came to the House today, with all his good intent, after seven long years of a Conservative Government who have been warned time and again, by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and by organisations both inside and outside the House, about the spiralling increase in the prison population and the dangers that that poses for standards and for the safety of prisoners and staff. Those dangers were outlined in the expenditure report, published in 1978. They were reiterated in the May committee's report in 1979. They were also repeated in the report of the Home Affairs Committee in 1981 and in the report of our parliamentary penal affairs group which was published in 1980, entitled, "Too Many Prisoners".

Those reports and many others have drawn the attention of successive Home Secretaries to the need for a substantial and permanent reduction in the prison population and for action to be taken quickly if we are to avoid a crisis in our prisons that could endanger the life, health, safety and welfare of prisoners and staff. Successive Conservative Home Secretaries have ignored those warnings and failed to take the sort of measures that have been reiterated today, and which would lead to a reduction in the prison population.

The Home Secretary said that the dispute provided him with an opportunity. So it does, and let us hope that he will take it, not just to ensure that there are decent working conditions for prison officers, to insist that they work in accordance with proper procedures, or to increase their numbers or pay, but to provide a more positive and constructive prison regime. We need a regime that makes some attempt at rehabilitation or reform, but that can be achieved only if the Home Secretary takes immediate and effective action to reduce the prison population.

There is no time to go through the numerous ways in which the prison population could be reduced. The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) has played an important role in all of our debates, and in seeking penal reform. He mentioned the 10-point programme which was published last week by the penal affairs group. Ten clear, well-argued, well-articulated and well-researched proposals were set out which would lead to a substantial reduction in the prison population. The Home Secretary could activate one of them today. He could activate section 32 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982, which the parliamentary group wrote into the legislation. It would enable him to release short-term, non-violent offenders in the last six months of their sentences, and would thus immediately release about 5,000 prisoners without endangering the public.

That would give the Home Secretary that necessary and essential breathing space in which to renegotiate the terms and conditions of prison officers and to embark upon the creation of that more positive and constructive prison

[Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk]

regime. Whichever option the Home Secretary goes for, prison officers, prisons and all those who care about such matters will not forgive him if he does not take with both hands the opportunity to reform our penal system so that we can have safe, decent and civilised conditions for both staff and prisoners.

6.35 pm

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I apologise for not being in the Chamber throughout the debate, but I had an unavoidable appointment to keep.

I rise to pay tribute to the prison staff in my constituency, which has a very unusual prison. It is in the old castle, and physical conditions could hardly be worse. Despite that, over the years every effort has been made to bring a civilised attitude to bear on the running of that gaol. The governor and the prison officers have an excellent relationship, and I have had the good fortune to be a prison visitor there for some years. In a report published only a few months ago Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons revealed that morale in our prison is exceptionally high.

It is important that people should realise that some prisons are exceptionally well run. Indeed, tribute should be paid to them. Nevertheless, prison officers feel that they have been ill-served over the question of overtime. It is crucial that they should be given higher basic salaries, so that perhaps we could remove some of the overtime. We must alleviate that sense of grievance if happy prisons, like that in Lancaster, are to remain well run.

6.37 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): This all too short debate takes place in the context of the total and abject failure of the Government's law and order policy. That failure is matched only by their failure to create employment. They are the two most disastrous areas of this Government's policies.

I agree with the POA which, in "A Service in Crisis", says:

"the conditions of work for prison officers and the role they are asked to carry out on behalf of society is fettered not only by the physical conditions, but by the total absence of a cohesive strategy on penal affairs."

If my opening comments are wrong, they are wrong only in as much as the Government do not have a policy to collapse. That is the problem for them. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) pointed out, the Government were given a positive opportunity with the May report. That report gave the Government an opportunity that no previous Government had. But again they either ducked it or missed it, depending on whether they knew that it existed. Since then, we have had a statement from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, in which he says:

"Our overriding concern during 1984 was, perhaps, that regime opportunities continued to diminish and that overcrowding—a fundamental cause of this and many other evils—seemed, at least in the short term, more likely to get worse than better."

Of course, the crisis exploded last week.

Incidentally, certain hon. Members on both sides of the House belong to the all-party group, which has done very good work on this issue. But the inspector had the following to say about night sanitary arrangements:

"The problem is exacerbated by overcrowding, which results in most of these inmates having to use their pots in the presence of one or two other inmates in the confines of a small cell. When the time for slopping out comes the prisoners queue up with their pots for the few toilets on the landing. The stench of urine and excrement pervades the prison. So awful is this procedure that many prisoners become constipated—others prefer to use their pants, hurling them and their contents out of the window when morning comes."

It is important to use the report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons to drive that point home. Some people do not realise the seriousness of the crisis.

The British penal system is one of the worst penal systems in the Western world. The hon. and learned Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) intends to visit the United States. I warn him that the United States copied its penal system from Britain. Britain and the United States imposed their system on West Germany, after Germany's defeat in 1945. The three worst penal systems in the Western world are those of West Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom. I would advise the hon. and learned Gentleman to go to Holland and Sweden, where he would see what can be done with a sensible prison policy. Holland has similar crime and inner-city problems to Britain.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): The right hon. Gentleman has just been there.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend has just said that the hon. and learned Member for Fylde has been there.

The Home Secretary said that he does not want to tell the courts what to do. He said that it was only Labour Members who wanted to tell the courts what to do. He had better send a note to the House of Lords and tell Lord Whitelaw that he must have crossed the Floor of the House, because Lord Whitelaw does not appear to know that he crossed the Floor of the House. Lord Whitelaw "threatened"—I use the word of Government Members—the courts that if they did not do something about long sentences, he would. On 1 August 1980, he said:

"I believe that a strong consensus is developing that shorter prison sentences are both appropriate and desirable. We now know that a longer sentence is most unlikely to aid a prisoner's rehabilitation in any sense, while the initial impact of imprisonment is quite sufficient to make a lasting impression in the minds of most offenders."

The then Home Secretary went on to talk about the importance of recognising the right of the courts to pass the sentences that they desired. My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) intervened and asked how long it would be before the Home Secretary—who is now Lord Whitelaw—would intervene. In response, Lord Whitelaw said:

"I shall not be trapped into saying how long I shall give the judiciary. . . . I want to see how this develops."—[*Official Report*, 1 August 1980; Vol. 989, c. 1907-8.]

If that is not a clear and definite sign that he would intervene if the courts did not respond, the Government had better ask Lord Whitelaw what he did mean. The House is responsible for deciding the length of sentences. The Home Secretary sent out an advice notice to 26,000 judges, recorders, magistrates and clerks of the court telling them to impose fewer sentences at the same time—as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) pointed out—as the chairman of the Tory party and the Prime Minister were saying, "Give longer sentences." The Government had better decide whose side they are on. They do not seem to know what they want.

Has the Home Secretary ever spoken to the chairman of the Tory party about his statements on law and order? If people such as the chairman of the Tory party and the Prime Minister keep saying, "Give longer sentences," would anybody be surprised if the courts ignored the advice from the Home Secretary, simply because the Government were speaking with two voices? If the Government want to reduce the length of prison sentences, they can. The House of Commons recently considered the Public Order Bill which sought to impose a prison sentence for disobeying a police officer's instructions on the roads along which a person could go to attend a demonstration. It is nonsense to get ourselves into such a state. No civilised country would dream of doing anything so stupid. As I said in Committee, and as the hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw) accepted, the Bill sought to impose a life sentence on a person taking part in a riot. That is way above anything that any other country has done. As I understand it, the Government are awaiting the outcome of a particular case before they decide to proceed with that measure. The Government must put their house in order.

What do the Government intend to do about Executive release? The provision of Executive release was introduced by the Government to reduce overcrowding in the prisons in a crisis. The present Home Secretary and the previous Home Secretary told us that we have a crisis in our prisons, but they have not used the Executive release provision. Perhaps the Minister will address himself to what the Government intend to use Executive release for and when they intend to use it. If last week's event was not a crisis which justified the use of Executive release, what is?

All I can suggest—the Prison Officers Association knows this—is that it is designed to be used in the context of industrial action. It will be used to try to break the POA, in the same way as the Government tried to break the teachers, the miners and everyone else with whom they disagree. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton indicated, the Government passed legislation insisting on a ballot. That was followed fully by the POA. Therefore, to turn round and accuse the POA of bucking the system is unacceptable.

The House should be reminded of what happened last Wednesday. The complement of staff on duty was that required by the manning instructions of the Government. Overtime was stopped. If the ordinary system had been suitable, it would have worked, but it did not. The Government's failure on the POA claim is that they tried to force the POA to drop all hint of industrial action, despite the ballot. The Government's climb-down—which is welcome—is a recognition that they should have accepted the offer of the POA to withdraw industrial action while negotiations took place.

I conclude with perhaps the most important point of all. Overtime is not desirable as a way of operating our prisons. When I said that the Government had thrown away an opportunity regarding the May report, I meant it. The May report stated that there was a desperate need to restructure prison officersn salaries, working conditions, and so on. The Government, especially the previous Home Secretary, should have created a proper, professional status for the job of prison officer. Prison officers do not want to be just turnkeys. The vast majority of prison officers do not want to rely on overtime. They are prepared to negotiate and discuss a proper, professional salary for the job.

If that happened, we could introduce a proper training scheme for prison officers. A prison officer gets 12 weeks basic training, of which the first three are spent working in a prison. An officer is on probation for a year. We must remember that prison officers deal with men and women who, at best, have many emotional and social problems, and, at worst, are sophisticated offenders. In the Northern Ireland conflict people have gone on hunger strikes to the point of killing themselves.

This crisis has given the Government another opportunity. If they duck or miss it again, as they did with the May committee, that will be a criminal mistake for which we shall hold the Government accountable.

6.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I cannot say that I agreed with a great deal of what the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, despite the fine eloquence of his contribution, because he seemed to sacrifice real depth for surface glitter—more like Richard Strauss than Bruckner. The right hon. Gentleman's speech was Brucknerian only in its length.

I agreed with the suggestion of the right hon. Member for Gorton that the problems have been present for many years, under Governments of both parties. I am glad that the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) recognised that. In 1979 the prison population, which numbered 42,500, represented 111 per cent. of certified normal accommodation. Today, at just under 47,000, it represents 113·5 per cent. of certified normal accommodation.

There has been a problem of overcrowding for a long time. It is wrong to suggest that the crisis in the prisons is of recent provenance, due to the over-use of imprisonment by the courts. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) has often put his finger on the real point, which is that the growth in the prison population has been predominantly a growth in remand prisoners. In June 1979 the figure was 6,100, and in March 1986 it was 9,500. That has to do with the confidence that the courts have in the intentions of certain people appearing before them to turn up for trial when called and not to commit further offences when on bail—matters that are, rightly, decisions for courts and not Governments.

Governments can help, as we have sought to do, in a number of material ways; for example, by experimenting with time limits, which bring cases on more quickly and cut out unwarranted delays, especially for those on remand in custody, and by increasing the number of bail hostels and expenditure on the probation service. Since the Conservative party took office that expenditure has increased by 35 per cent. in real terms. The increase in the number of sentenced prisoners has been relatively modest, from 35,700 in the system in June 1979, to 37,100 at the end of March 1986—an increase of 1,400, which is very much at the margin.

Contrary to the assertion of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), the average prison population increased more in the 1970s than it did in the 1980s. It is no good the hon. Gentleman shaking his head. I am giving him the facts. If I am wrong, no doubt he will correct me, but I suspect that he will not need to do so. The average prison population increased between

[Mr. David Mellor]

1974 and 1979 14 per cent., and between 1979 and 1985 by 9·5 per cent. Much of the hon. Gentleman's case was a house built on sand.

Between 1979 and 1984 there was a significant increase in the number of sentenced prisoners, which reflected an increase in the number of indictable offences cleared up —250,000 last year with an increase of about 50 per cent. in the business of the Crown court. It is an admission not of failure but of success if more criminals are caught and sentenced. If it is appropriate that they should go to prison, it is a Government's duty to provide prison places so that the courts may so sentence. That is the public's view. In so far as it is not the Labour party's view, it shows that, despite all its efforts to regain the ground on the law and order issue which it has lost over the years, it is still very much at variance with the outlook of the ordinary man on the street.

In 1984, 74,000 people were sentenced to prison, compared with 60,000 in 1979. That was certainly an increase, but, in view of the proper calls for non-custodial sentences, in which we believe when such sentences are appropriate, that is worth setting in its proper context. Taking one non-custodial sentence alone, between 1979 and 1984 the number of sentences to community service passed by the courts increased from 13,000 to 34,000—an increase of 21,000, or 50 per cent. more than the increase in the number of people sent to prison. I should have thought that that showed the Government's success in devising penalties in which the courts had confidence and in providing the resources through the probation service and the probation ancilliaries to implement those sentences.

The Opposition's attacks were well wide of the mark on a number of counts. I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) commend the penal system in the Netherlands as one that we should follow. I wonder whether that could be sustained by a visit to Amsterdam to see the law and order position there, or by the observation, which is often made, that in the Netherlands if there is no room in prison for a person sentenced to prison, he goes home and waits for the call to come. Is that the criminal justice system that the Opposition advise?

I cannot help but think that the Opposition's commendation of the completely outmoded approach on which even the Netherlands authorities are turning their backs is, once again, a sign of how out of touch they are. The comparisons made with other European countries fall down on the one country which is perhaps comparable to the United Kingdom — West Germany. The special pleading that somehow the West Germans inherited our penal system does not seem to be anywhere near the mark.

Much of the Opposition's attack was based on the assertion that it is this Government and this Home Secretary who have created a crisis in the prisons. However, in 1979 the Conservative party inherited a rundown prison estate because the last Government, although they knew the problems, failed to do anything about them. Because there has been some dispute about the figures, and because, for the bulk of the debate, the former Home Secretary — the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South — challenged one of my figures, I shall cite the figures so that we can end the argument once and for all. On staff costs, between 1974-75 and 1978-79 there was an increase in cash terms from £75 million to £158 million. Because that was the notorious period during which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland was Under-Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection, such was the impact of inflation that an increase of——

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-Upon-Tweed): So what?

Mr. Mellor: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman. There was an increase of 111 per cent. in cash terms, which amounted to an increase of only 9 per cent. in real terms at the end of that period. However, between 1979-80 and 1985-86, under this Government, there was an increase in cash terms from £194 million to £386 million, which is an increase of 99 per cent. in cash terms and 43 per cent. in real terms. That is a fivefold increase in real terms compared with the so-called achievements of the Labour Government.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mellor: Let me finish the indictment and then the right hon. Gentleman can plead to it.

I come now to the points on new buildings, because the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South commented on that. During the lifetime of the Labour Government there was a decrease of 20 per cent. in real terms in capital expenditure on prison building. The right hon. Gentleman's defence of that period appeared to be confined to his tenure of office, when he denied that there were any cuts. I shall, therefore, cite the figures. Capital expenditure in 1974-75 was £20 million; in 1975-76, £29 million; and — we come to the point where the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South came on the scene—in 1976-77——

Mr. Merlyn Rees: When was that?

Mr. Mellor: In September. In 1976-77, expenditure was £25 million.

Mr. Rees: That was not me.

Mr. Mellor: We are coming to the bit that implicates the right hon. Gentleman. In 1977-78 it was £25 million, and in 1978-79—the right hon. Gentleman cannot say that he was not there——

Mr. Rees: I was there.

Mr. Mellor: —it was £23 million.

Mr. Kaufman *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: Wait a minute. I am dealing with the master and I shall come later to the apprentice.

The grandiloquent account by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South of his battles with the Treasury does not match the reality that there was a decrease — I shall give way to him if my figures are wrong — in capital spending, leaving us with a disgraceful prison estate to pick up. During the Labour Government only £122 million was spent on the prisons. We have spent £322 million.

Mr. Kaufman: Now that the hon. Gentleman is dealing with cash terms and real terms, will he repudiate the Prime Minister's false statement last Thursday that

"We have increased spending on the prison service by 85 per cent. in real terms."—[*Official Report*, 1 May 1986; Vol. 96, c. 1097.]

when the Government have done nothing of the kind, and when the Home Secretary has admitted this afternoon that

the expenditure was less than one third of the amount cited by the Prime Minister? Will the hon. Gentleman now be brave and courageous enough to say that last Thursday the Prime Minister misinformed and misled the House?

Mr. Mellor: I am not accountable for what my right hon. Friend says about that. I am giving the House the figures. If, by a slip of the tongue, my right hon. friend the Prime Minister gave the wrong figure, that cannot possibly be the excuse for the fact that, under the Labour Government, there was a decrease just at the time when there should have been an increase, in the prison building programme, while under this Government there has been an increase of 173 per cent. in the amount spent this year compared with 1979-80. For the Labour party to think that a slip of the tongue made during Question Time is an answer to a charge of neglect of the prison estate during the five years in which the Labour party were in government is a sign of the shallowness of its approach to a deeply serious and difficult issue.

Our prison building programme has brought on stream nearly 3,000 new places in the past three years, with the promise of more than 11,000 places to come. That enables us to deal seriously with the real problems of providing a prison system that is appropriate for the present situation. All that increased expenditure needs to be based on a proper and efficient system in the prisons so that those who work in the prisons do so according to modern and not outdated industrial relations practices. That is what the Government are tackling.

Question put, That this House do now adjourn:—

The House divided: Ayes 160, Noes 260.

Divison No. 169] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Meacher, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sean Hughes and
Mr. Ron Davies.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brooke, Hon Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian

Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

7.12 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you can advise me and my colleague Members from the London borough of Newham. An election centrepiece going around in the Inner London education authority area, distributed by the Conservative Party, says:

"In Labour-controlled Newham the Council have voted to stop police entering schools to build contacts with young people. This is wrong."

It is not only wrong, but a downright lie. Newham borough council has applied to the courts——

Mr. Speaker: What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Banks: The point of order is this. Newham borough council has applied to the courts and has been granted an injunction against Conservative Central Office distributing that scurrilous piece of propaganda. Conservative Central Office has ignored the injunction. I should like to ask whether it is possible for the Law Officers to come to the House and explain why an injunction granted by the courts is not being enforced by Conservative Central Office——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is certainly not a matter for me. As the hon. Gentleman well knows, I am responsible for what goes on inside the House. I cannot be held responsible for what goes on outside.

Mr. Banks: I understand, but further to that point of order, this is to save you embarrassment, Mr. Speaker, because Newham borough council has applied to the courts for the committal of the chairman of the Conservative party. Obviously, it would be embarrassing if he was arrested——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me either.

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

(Clauses Nos. 2, 15, 26 and 80)

Considered in Committee.

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Ordered.

That the order in which proceedings in Committee of the Whole House on the Finance Bill are to be taken shall be Clause 26, Clause 15, Clause 2 and Clause 80.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 26

RELIEF FOR DONATIONS UNDER PAYROLL DEDUCTION SCHEME

7.14 pm

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 24, line 26, leave out '£100' and insert '£108'.

I strongly welcome the clause and its aim of encouraging individual donations by employees. It is one part of a most imaginative package of concessions for charities in the Finance Bill this year. I am sure that it will be welcomed on both sides of the House.

The purpose of my amendment is both to encourage and to make it simpler for employees who are weekly paid to exploit that valuable concession to the maximum. The present figure of £100 a year amounts to £1·9230769 a week—then my calculator went off the end of the scale. Large numbers of employees might wish to give £1·92 per week and large numbers of employers might welcome making that calculation, but it seems more likely that a figure of £2 would be easier to promote for weekly paid employees. We must remember that the concession in clause 26 will work only if sufficiently large numbers of employers — including, in particular, the people who work in the payroll offices — are happy and find it administratively convenient to operate it.

I am advised that every few years there is a year in which there are 53 pay days, so a figure of £104 would still not be sufficient to allow employees to pay £2 a week to a charity of their choice. That takes us to £106, but as I am sure my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will have noticed, the amount in the amendment is £108. That is to take into account the fact that we are very close to allowing monthly paid employees a round figure of £9 a month. That gives us the figure of £108.

Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will feel able to be sympathetic to the amendment. If it was accepted, much larger sums of money would be channelled into charity through the concession and the voluntary sector would benefit accordingly. In particular, I believe that larger sums would be given by relatively low-paid employees, who are paid by the week.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I also welcome clause 26. I noticed the proviso that the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out in his Budget statement, when he said that the VAT concessions that he was making were not an annual event. I suspect that what he had in mind was to produce another focus for charity giving, which is reasonable. The VAT road was producing more and more anomalies. I suspect that he was trying to divert attention to more fruitful areas of charity relief. This is a useful one, which one wants to encourage. The idea of tax relief on payroll giving is an imaginative venture, and I look forward to seeing it implemented.

I am a little concerned about the extension of allowances. There is a danger of following the United States road, whereby one gives so many allowances, and narrows the tax base again and again, which leads to much higher rates of taxation than one would wish. That does not apply in this country. It is possible to make a reasonable exception in the case of charitable relief and I prefer to accept the advantages and virtues of that.

A new definition of charities will be needed. There has been a big gap in our examination of the various ways in which charities operate. All hon. Members know that charities law is a minefield and an area which has frightened so many legislators. As we move towards granting tax relief, we can no longer delay the need to examine charity law and the anomalies that must be dealt with in due course.

The provisions for avoidance are necessary. It is especially nasty to have to make provisions for avoidance on charity matters. It would seem that a number of people might confuse the wells of benevolence with the murky waters of greed. It is sad that these anti-avoidance provisions are necessary, but I accept that there is a need for them and I hope that they will meet the real requirements in that area. A number of people have set up bogus charities and the problem is that such activities may be on the increase. It may be sad, but these anti-avoidance provisions are necessary.

I know that the Chancellor of the Exchequer used to be interested in index-linking the sum and it may be that, over a period, the figure of £100 may prove inadequate. That sum might be related to the individual's pay or to a maximum limit and there are various ways of calculating that figure. However, we are in the initial stages and obviously a round figure is appropriate. We can review the progress of the scheme and the Chancellor of the Exchequer will unavoidably, from now on, have to come to the House with new proposals or amendments to existing proposals which we can examine happily in the years to come.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) on moving this extremely sensible amendment. Many hon. Members are aware that in dealing with this new concept of payroll deduction, ordinary employees will be encouraged to consider re-ordering their affairs and taking a fresh look at regular charitable giving. They will be encouraged to do that by their employers only if the discipline is convenient.

I believe that the effect of the figure of £100 set out in the clause will be to limit the deduction to £52. Most modern payroll schemes, especially computerised schemes, manage pence with some difficulty. As far as the employee is concerned, round sum of pounds per week will be much more convenient for him and will meet little resistance from his employer. It is possible that some will go for £1·50 a week, and therefore the effective maximum for those on weekly pay will be £78 per annum. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister cannot be responsible for this, but I detect a little sleight of hand somewhere from the back of the Treasury.

[Mr. Michael Stern]

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's intention in his Budget speech was to maximise charitable giving to a level that could be recorded in terms of revenue. However, I wonder whether, in making that calculation, someone somewhere did not think that by drafting the clause in its present form they would effectively halve the possible relief.

I commend the amendment. It will make the charitable deduction scheme more effective and more readily saleable and, subject to the comments of my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, it could operate at very little, if any, extra cost.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Like my hon. Friends the Members for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) and for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) and the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, (Mr. Sheldon), I welcome the steps taken by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Budget to make donations to charity much easier than they have been in the past through the fiscal means, embodied in the clause. I also welcome the amendment introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South. I should like to know why the Treasury has determined that £100 is the correct level at which to set the maximum allowed under the scheme.

The administrative costs of the scheme will be considerable. No one should underestimate the difficulties which employer and employee will have to face before they can take advantage of the concession made by the £100 limit. I should like to consider some of the hurdles which will have to be crossed by all those responsible for the administration of the scheme.

First, the employer's professional advisers will have to meet him to explain the scheme in detail. Many small firms without great expertise in their wages departments may have employees who wish to take advantage of the scheme, so it will be necessary to ensure that the employer, who may employ only one, two or three people, understands the way in which the scheme can be administered.

When the scheme has been explained to him by his professional advisers, the employer will have to devise a scheme which suits his particular circumstances and liaise with the wages office to ensure that the scheme can be implemented. The scheme must then be explained in detail to the employees, many of whom will have little idea of its taxation implications. Eventually employees will need to give authority for payroll deductions in writing. If the payroll is computerised, the programme will have to be rewritten. If it is not computerised, considerable additional time will be spent administering the scheme in the wages office. The employer will have to liaise with organisations like the Charities Aid Foundation to agree the scheme and set up the necessary procedures, including the periodic payments to charities.

Procedures for administering schemes will have to be set up for those employees leaving or joining the employer during the course of a fiscal year, because the £100 deduction is per employee per year, and the employer will have to ensure that a joining employee has not already utilised the year's entitlement. Corresponding complications may arise for an employee who is leaving an employer.

There will also be difficulties in establishing the employee's entitlement to a deduction if that employee has multiple employments. An employee who has not revealed his multiple employments may well be deterred from joining the scheme.

Full records will have to be maintained for the inspection of the Inland Revenue, as required. Tax deduction cards will probably be needed to note the deductions given, and the end of year Inland Revenue return—form B35—may also need to show details of the deductions.

The scheme is bound to involve administrative costs, which may be fairly considerable to the employer. As, for the vast majority of the work force, the relief will be £29 per annum—that is, £100 at the basic rate of 29 per cent.—the employer may conclude that the tax savings and incentives involved are not worth the administrative costs. All those matters must be considered.

It is against that background that I commend the amendment. I also take this opportunity to invite my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to explain why the level was set at £100, and whether he feels that, in setting such a low figure, there might be a disincentive to take advantage of the scheme, which I am sure is widely welcomed in the House and by the nation.

7.30 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): We shall have an opportunity to debate clause 26 overall later in our debates on the Finance Bill, when we debate clause stand part. As the House will know, we welcome the payroll provision, in particular because it seems to us to open up charitable giving to many more people than before. Previously, through deeds of covenant over a four-year period, people were entitled to give and get tax relief, but that was a more sophisticated form of donation, and the payroll scheme should open up giving to a much broader spectrum of people.

The purpose of the amendment, as I understand it, is to ensure that, if there are difficulties because of the fractions of money that will be paid over to charities on a weekly or a monthly basis, such difficulties do not result in the levelling down of the amount of money given but rather in the full provision being taken advantage of. At the moment, if the full £100 relief were to be given, in a 52-week year, that would result in a weekly payment of £1.92·3, which is not a happy figure for employers to have to pay out. In a 53-week year, it would be £1.88·6, and would work out on a monthly basis at £4.34·7. The figure of £108 is reached by saying that, if we round the figure up a bit, it should be about £2 a week, and if it were £2 a week in a 52-week year, it would be £104 and £2 a week in a 53-week year would be £106. To provide for monthly payments, the figure has been rounded up to a multiple of 12, which is how we get £108.

The Minister should tell us whether he believes that there will be any significant disincentive to paying the maximum of £100 because of the problems of computation that will arise, and of employers having to deduct such fractions. In addition, what would the extra cost be for increasing the relief from £100 to £108? We support the payroll deduction and are sympathetic to the amendment. We should like to see from what the Minister says whether there are problems that could be avoided by making the

figure £108. That does not seem a round figure, but in the way in which the scheme will operate, it is a rounder figure than £100.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): I am grateful to all right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken for enabling us to begin the Committee stage of this year's Finance Bill on such an agreeable and harmonious note.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): There is something wrong.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Member seems to be somewhat disconcerted by this.

As we are talking about charities, it is appropriate that we should begin in a spirit of co-operation and understanding. Therefore, I welcome the way in which the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), and my hon. Friends the Members for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), for Corby (Mr. Powell) and for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), who introduced the amendment, welcomed the concept of the payroll scheme, which we think will widen the scope for contributions to charity in an acceptable way. We are most anxious that it should not be unduly burdensome administratively, to take up a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Corby.

Before I answer the specific points, I shall touch briefly on one matter mentioned by the hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. With his long and distinguished experience as a Treasury Minister, he will appreciate that it is necessary in our charities package to include anti-avoidance measures. We always feel inclined to do so, with regret, because of the difficulties of dealing with such technical matters. This subject has attracted a certain amount of comment and anxiety and it might be helpful if I say a few words about that now.

No one has disputed that abuse has occurred, and I am sure that it is right to take steps to tackle it, but we are determined to ensure that in doing so we do not put genuine charitable work at a disadvantage. There are difficult technical considerations involved here and, as with most measures dealing with abuse, it is not possible to consult before a Budget. We have, however, received a number of representations to the effect that the proposals, as they stand, are likely to cause difficulty for a number of responsible bona fide charities. We are therefore considering these representations most carefully, and the Inland Revenue is consulting about them with the charitable organisations involved.

Meanwhile, I can give the responsible charities this assurance—that we fully recognise the questions that they have raised, and shall take steps to respond to them, after thorough consultation, during the passage of the Bill. We are as anxious as they are that the potential adverse consequences that they foresee do not occur.

I appreciate the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South when he moved this amendment, which were echoed by other hon. Members, about the competing figures that might be used for this purpose, based on so many weeks or months in the year. The amendment is designed to cope with that problem. However, any monetary limit is to some extent arbitrary. No single figure will provide a convenient round sum per week or month in all circumstances.

We looked at this most carefully and found, for example, that although, as everybody knows, there will be occasional years in which 53 weekly pay days fall in one tax year, it is also the case that some people are paid fortnightly or every four weeks, so that an extra pay day in any particular year can sometimes mean bringing in up to 56 weeks. That would require a higher figure. However, if the limit were increased to £112 to cover up to 56 weeks at £2 a week, it would not be a round sum per month. Therefore, taking the monthly and weekly figures, it is not possible to arrive at a universally correct figure.

I can explain why we chose the round sum of £100 as the annual limit. We had it in mind that for many employees that was a substantial figure and would represent a generous contribution to charity. It will be an upper limit and by no means all those who want to contribute to the scheme will contribute that amount, or even close to that amount. It has the great advantage of being a round figure and one that is readily remembered and understood. That is important in getting the new scheme off to a good start. If a substantial number of employees can give up to the £100 limit, the benefit to charities would be considerable.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield asked me about the cost. It is exceedingly difficult, to the point of impossibility, to quantify small changes in the upper limit, for the good reason that it is exceedingly difficult to quantify the cost of the scheme as a whole before we know better the likely take-up. It will become more apparent over the year, as consultations and discussions take place. We have estimated that the overall cost to the Revenue might be about £20 million in the first year, but that is again based on assumptions about participants and their average rate. I am afraid that I have to decline to be precise about that.

We shall be looking at the figure of £100 in the light of experience. We shall want to see how the scheme gets going and we shall keep the limit under review from year to year. It would not be sensible to change it now. It would be better for the scheme to be readily comprehensible with a simple round sum of £100, which potential donors can easily understand and remember. I hope that my hon. Friend will withdraw his amendment on the understanding that we accept the valid points about the details of how contributions may be made in practice and that we can review it when we have experience of how the scheme works.

Mr. Yeo: I welcome very much what the Economic Secretary has said about listening to the charity concerns on the possible adverse consequences of the anti-avoidance provisions elsewhere in the Bill. That will be of relief to many charities which feel that they may otherwise be hit in legitimate fund-raising activities.

I was far from persuaded by my hon. Friend when he explained how he had arrived at the figure of £100. That is the one figure which is not a round sum in the way any employee is paid; it is not a round weekly, two-weekly, four-weekly or monthly sum. Unless there are employees who are paid annually—I do not believe that there are—£100 is the one figure which the Treasury could have managed to choose which is not a round sum by any method of calculation. Whatever other justification there may be for choosing £100, to claim that it is a round sum is the least convincing.

[Mr. Yeo]

However, I appreciate that we have much to learn about how effective the scheme will be. The take-up will depend on quite a few factors, including the administration points raised by my hon. Friend during the debate and, indeed, the success of the charities in selling schemes to employers and employees. So we shall have to learn by experience.

Before withdrawing my amendment I wish to ask my hon. Friend one question. Will the Inland Revenue be willing to make available statistics about the number of people giving amounts which are close to the upper limit? If we are to argue later for a higher limit, can we have access to information which, as I understand it, will only be in the possession of the Inland Revenue?

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall have to invite my hon. Friend to table questions at the appropriate time; we shall see what answer we can give then. Because the arrangements for the scheme will take some time to put in place, it will not become operative until this time next year. Therefore, it will be some time before such evidence as my hon. Friend wants will be available.

Mr. Yeo: I appreciate that point. Even the charities might not feel that the first full year of operation was a fair basis on which to assess the scheme. It may take two or three years for the scheme to get into its stride. I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said. When we table questions relating to Inland Revenue statistics, I hope that we shall not be met with such answers as I have come across in the past—that the information is confidential or that it would cost too much to supply it. We shall have to wait to see what happens.

In the light of what my hon. Friend has said, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Yeo: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 24, line 31, at end add—

'(9) Any approval under this section of a scheme by the Board is not to be unreasonably withheld.'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 7, in page 24, line 31, at end add—

'(9) Nothing in these provisions shall prevent the agent and the charity from being the same person.'.

Mr. Yeo: I am sure my hon. Friend is aware of the welcome which clause 26 has had from charities generally. He may also be aware by now of the concern which has been provoked about the practical operation of the proposed payroll donation schemes. That concern emanates from two different sources. First, there are charities which already operate payroll giving schemes; Dr. Barnardo's and the Save the Children Fund are perhaps two of the most distinguished in this category. They already have relationships with established companies and many employees give money net.

The position of those organisations would be protected by the amendment which has been tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman). I do not want to trespass on his territory, except to say that I strongly support the sentiment and aim of his amendment. I am anxious that charities which are already involved in successful payroll schemes, in some cases for many years, should not be forced to use an outside agency to process a scheme so that the people giving money can get the benefit of the tax deduction. That would be potentially inconvenient and would give rise to further expense.

7.45 pm

The second category of charities which is concerned about the practical operation of the concession comprises those which do not yet have in operation payroll deduction schemes with employers, but which hope to do so as a result of the concession. That includes a large number of charities, large and small, national and local. In three or four years we all want to see tens of millions of pounds flowing into charities because of this valuable concession, but if full advantage is to be taken of it a large number of agencies will have to be approved under the provisions of the Bill.

According to the clause, schemes and agencies have to be approved by the Inland Revenue. I am slightly nervous that it might be convenient, from the point of view of the Inland Revenue, if only a small number, or even a very small number, of agencies and schemes were approved. The administrative convenience of the Inland Revenue must not be allowed to disrupt the successful development of payroll donations.

The concern of various organisations which have approached me about this has been heightened by recent claims by the Charities Aid Foundation. I welcome the involvement of the Charities Aid Foundation in the concession and I strongly support the initiatives which it has been taking since the Budget. I also support its work generally, but I must take issue with a statement in a leaflet which it published recently, called "Payroll giving — give as you earn", which said:

"There will be strict rules governing who can be an agency charity but Charities Aid Foundation will be one and probably the principal national agency."

That claim is neither helpful nor justified. If the Charities Aid Foundation succeeds in becoming the principal national agency over some years in full and free competition with other agencies, that is fine, but it would be unfortunate if the provisions of the Bill were interpreted in such a way as to restrict the establishment of other national agencies under the clause.

Groups of major charities feel that they could run their own agency on a joint basis as efficiently as any other body. Not only should they be allowed, but they should be encouraged to do so. Some major charities are talking to each other about the establishment of such an agency.

In addition, local charities may wish to take advantage of the concession. One example is the Ipswich and East Suffolk Spastics Society, of which I have the honour of being president. We might establish a relationship with a major East Anglian company such as Fison. In those circumstances the charity or the company might not want to be obliged to go to a national agency with headquarters in a part of the country well away from Suffolk. It would be more appropriate to have a local agency, based near the charity or the employer. We want to see a network of local agencies; I mean genuinely local agencies and not branches of a national agency.

All hon. Members want the clause to be successful. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend will at least accept the spirit of my amendment. Can he assure us that it is the wish of the Treasury that many payroll schemes will be established and that that will be facilitated by the establishment of a large number of agencies approved by the Inland Revenue? Above all, I ask my hon. Friend for

an assurance that the Treasury will take steps to ensure that the Inland Revenue does not unreasonably impede the establishment of such agencies.

I commend my amendment to the Committee.

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): The purpose of my amendment which is grouped with the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), is to probe the Government's reasons for the technical language in clause 26.

The scheme is excellent and is warmly to be welcomed. I speak on behalf of many companies, not only in my constituency but nationally, which are enthusiastic about the scheme and will operate it with vigour. My amendment would enable the charities themselves to act as agents for the disbursement of contributions which have been collected by employers from employees, and I envisage that the charities, acting as disbursers of the funds, would perhaps keep a portion for their own charity, the charity designated by the employees, and, as agents, pass on to the other charities the remainder of the amounts collected. I would stress that under the provisions of this clause my amendment, if it proved acceptable, could be operated only with the agreement of the employer—because it is an enabling provision—the Inland Revenue.

As I read the clause — I look forward to enlightment by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary —it seems to restrict the agents through whom the amounts collected by employers are ultimately passed on to charities to bodies such as the Charities Aid Foundation, and seems to prevent charities such as those mentioned by the hon. Member for Suffolk, South from performing that task.

The amendment is supported by Dr. Barnardo's, Save the Children Fund, Help the Aged and a number of other charities. It is important to recognise that some major charities already run collection schemes through company payrolls. The schemes work without tax relief and operate on a net basis rather than on the gross basis proposed by the Bill. Where these collection schemes are operating sensibly they should be allowed to continue. I understand that Dr. Barnardo's runs a payroll scheme for about 12,000 employers and raises about £2 million a year through them. I understand that it has operated the scheme for about 80 years. Save the Children Fund operates a payroll scheme for about 4,500 employers, raising about £500,000 a year, and has done so since 1948. Between those two charities alone, therefore, there are schemes already in existence on a net basis which cover perhaps 1 million employees. A considerable body of expertise has been built up in the operation of these schemes.

There are three principles for testing the validity and acceptability, not only of my amendment, but of the clause as a whole. I believe that the clause as amended would meet all the tests. The first must be that a payroll deduction scheme is easy for the employer to administer. My hon. Friends the Members for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), and for Corby (Mr. Powell) alluded to the administrative cost of the scheme, but in my conversations, both in my constituency and outside, I have found employers to be enthusiastic about the scheme and prepared to operate it, not only converting an existing net scheme to a gross scheme, but introducing new schemes. It is important, however, that the payroll deduction scheme should be easy to administer.

Under my amendment it would be up to the employer to decide whether he would use an agent, such as the Charities Aid Foundation, or an existing charity which had been collecting funds for a number of years under the companies payroll deduction scheme and passing on perhaps a portion of the amount collected to other charities. It would be up to the employer to select the easiest and simpliest route. Realistically, we must accept that there will be just one scheme operating in a company and that it will be a gross scheme.

There should also be maximum freedom of choice for the employee. That already happens at present with deduction schemes. If the amendment were accepted there would be no change, because it would facilitate maximum choice by the employee when it came to asking his employer to decuct an amount, within the limit of the clause, and send it to the charity of his choice.

Thirdly, I agree with my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Suffolk, South that we must encourage diversity of systems for collcting money for ultimate donation to charities. We should not have a single, uniform, monolithic system. Many new schemes will be set up under clause 26. I welcome the fact that amounts will be collected by the employers and paid over, for example, to the Charities Aid Foundation, but there are existing schemes run by the charities themselves, and where they have proved worth while there seems no reason to disturb them. In those circumstances, the clause should facilitate the continuation of existing schemes.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid Kent): My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) has raised in my mind a doubt that was not there before. As I understand it, the intention of the clause is to make it possible for employees to vary the charity to which they pay if the scheme is similar to those run by the Charities Aid Foundation at present. Just because a scheme is running, this should not prevent the employee from choosing the charity to which, out of many, he would like his money sent.

I should like to reinforce the point that there are enormous dangers in having a limited number of agents. There are even greater dangers in having only one. One of the serious disadvantages of the American system of philanthropy is that it is very often possible for United Way and similar organisations to exclude from the disbursement of money raised through their efforts charities of which they, the organisers, disapprove. This had made it much harder for innovative charities to get off the ground in the United States than is good for the cause of charity. Those charitable organisations which have long experience of running these schemes should be encouraged to continue to do so.

The Charity Commission does extraordinarily good work in antediluvian circumstances. If we had a properly equipped Charity Commission, it would be quite easy to make administrative distinctions between, for example, charities which were deemed capable, either through experience or other means, of running schemes of this kind and those which were not. I very much hope that we will see a time then the Charity Commission comes into the 20th century and has a computer.

Mr. Stern: Perhaps I may contribute a word of caution to this remarkably unanimous debate. I was most impressed by the comments of my hon. Friend the Member

[Mr. Stern]

for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) when he referred to the need for this amendment as something which would facilitate local agencies. I think particularly of large companies in my own constituency, such as British Aerospace or Rolls-Royce, which would much prefer to approach a local rather than a national agency.

It seems to me—this point has not come out in my hon. Friend's comments—that a great advantage of this particular clause will be its encouragement not of the big national charities but of the small local ones — those which have neither the muscle nor the expense money to go in for big national campaigns — which will find through local employers a ready access to additional funding which was previously denied to them by the big battalions.

On that basis I am a little worried by the suggestion that some of the larger national charities should be confirmed as agencies. I am not wholly set against the idea, and I look forward to the comments of my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary when he replies. However, there are two potential disadvantages. First, in selecting the charity to receive a donation, many employees will take the easy way out. If the agency on every letterhead in relation to the payroll deduction scheme happens to be Barnardo's, there is at least a danger of a boost to the agency charity at the expense of many local charities which could well expect to benefit from a local scheme.

If existing charities are encouraged to set up agencies — I hope that they will be, because they have considerable expertise in the area—they should do so only on the basis of setting up an agency which is separate from the charity concerned so that the possible advantage of the name of the charity would not appear in the name of the agency.

I hope that whatever administrative arrangements are made, it will be borne in mind that the employer will also incur costs. Even where payroll deduction schemes are in operation or are to be adapted, there should be no pressure on the employer to go to more than one agent simply because of his employees' choice of charities.

8 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Several charities have been mentioned as supporting the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman). May I add to them by mentioning one of the big battalions, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which which I am closely associated. The society is worried about the possibility that the agents mentioned in the clause may be restricted to one or very few organisations, because that could have several effects. One would be to remove a charity's freedom to market itself. Another would be to remove the freedom of companies to back a charity of their choice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) envisaged a local initiative. In fact, that already happens on a national basis. For example, boards of directors of companies may decide to back a particular charity by saying that they will match pound for pound anything that their employees are prepared to give that charity. To go through an agency in the way that is envisaged would not be compatible with such a scheme.

Presumably, the Charities Aid Foundation would make some sort of charge, as indeed might any agency. Different agencies may have different fees. If the giving has to be channeled through only one or two specified agencies, the amount that a charity finally receives may be that much less.

It could be argued that my hon. Friend's amendment will result in a proliferation of agencies because, according to the book, there are literally thousands of charities. But we are probably talking, almost, of the top 200 in the CAF list and perhaps a handful of local charities. It would be feasible for some charities to get together, along the lines already suggested, and act as an agency. That would not necessarily have the effect envisaged by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern).

I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will consider that seriously. If he is not at this stage prepared to accept the amendment, I hope that he will at least give some further thought to the ideas that have been put forward, with a view to amending the final scheme so that the agents can be drawn from a fairly wide spectrum.

Mr. Blair: The regulations that the Government will promulgate will tell us a great deal more than the Bill, but we should have some clear idea of the Government's concept of how the scheme will operate. Will it simply embrace a few charitable collecting agencies or have a much broader scope, or are the Government simply willing to let it run and see what happens? We need to know that, because many charities have expressed concern that they may be unduly limited if they are not also allowed to act as agents.

I have doubts about some of the points made by the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo). At present, the employer will deduct the money and pay it to the agent who will give it to the charity. Whereas the employer will arrange for the agency, for which there will be board approval, the employee will simply tell the employer the amount to be deducted and the employee will presumably nominate to the agent the charities to which he wishes to give.

One desirable advantage of that scheme is its administrative simplicity for the employer who has one agent for all the employees. Secondly, there is a notion of confidentiality between the employee and the agent about the charities to which he wishes to give. I do not know whether that does or could happen but an employer may want to foist a pet charity on his employees who may then feel in some way constrained if they have to give to a charity that is an agent. The notion of confidentiality is important.

Thirdly, whereas the large charities may want to act as agents, many of the smaller charities could lose out. It would be unfortunate if some of the smaller charities were eased out of the competition by the larger charities. The disadvantage of the scheme as presently envisaged is that Dr. Barnardo's and other charities already have a payroll scheme without tax relief, so why should not they continue to do so? There are also charities—my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) asked me to mention MENCAP in this connection — that do not operate such a scheme but may want to do so, so why shouldn't they?

I want to make two points to the Economic Secretary but I shall keep an open mind until he replies. First, is there anything in the provisions to prevent a charity from setting up an agency with the same effect as the amendment? Secondly, is not an important facet of this that we have to

decide whether, if charities are to be allowed to act as collecting agents, they can simply collect for themselves as agents or whether they have to collect as agents in the proper sense of the term and distribute not merely to themselves but to any other charities that an employee may want to mention?

Both those points are important in terms of how the Government see the scheme operating. It would only be acceptable—I notice that the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) made the same assumption—for charities to act as agents if they acted properly as agents and were not simply collecting on their own behalf. Even then it would obviously be in their interests that more rather than less money sticks to their fingers as it passes through their hands. I should be obliged if the Minister would give us some information or enlarge our understanding of the exact role which the Government envisage for agents. Will there be many or few agents? If a charity is allowed to become an agent, will donations be confined to that charity or will they be spread over several charities?

Mr. Ian Stewart: Our relatively short debate on the two linked amendments gave some of my hon. Friends the opportunity to propose ideas — sometimes conflicting ideas — that we must take into account before the arrangements for the agencies are finalised. I welcome the sensible contribution of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who asked some questions which have been in our minds and which, like those of my hon. Friends, must be considered before the schemes and the agencies are set up.

My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) hoped that there would be no limitation on the number of companies or agencies taking part out of consideration for the convenience of the Inland Revenue. We do not intend that administrative convenience should limit the number of agencies. We are anxious that as many companies as possible should take part in the scheme and that there should be a range of choices for them in the agencies that they select. I do not exclude the idea of local or regional agencies, so long as they are willing, if requested by participants in that scheme, to make payments to any charity. In many cases, it would be sensible for the local interest to be represented through one agency, and I hope that will rise.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) said that there could be dangers in establishing only a few agencies. The Government will not specify the number of agencies because the scheme must not be operated by administrative instruction from the Government. It should develop according to the needs and interests of the people taking part. There should be no bar on existing charities acting as agents, provided that they act fairly and without bias as agents for any charity that may wish to be nominated.

The specific points raised in the amendments are of some interest. Amendment No. 5 refers to the Board of Inland Revenue unreasonably witholding approval of a scheme. Clause 26 already sets out the basic conditions of relief. Clause 27, which is the more technical clause, provides for the Treasury to make regulations governing the grant or withdrawal of approval of schemes by the board. That should enable us to set out the more detailed conditions of approval in the regulations. It will be necessary to ensure that, once the donations have been deducted from the employee's pay and received their tax relief, they cannot be returned to the employee and that they are paid over to the agency for the charities within a reasonable time. We shall wish to embody several such practical considerations in the regulations.

The board's main function in considering schemes for approval will then be to see whether the scheme meets the requirements laid down by the legislation and regulations. Although this point is rather more appropriate to clause 27 than to clause 26, I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South that the board will not withhold approval from schemes without good reason. In any event, a charity could look to the courts for effective redress under existing administrative law. No doubt it would be a cumbersome process, but if in any case the board acted unreasonably, it would be exposed to redress in that way. It is not necessary to amend the Bill in the way that my hon. Friend suggests, but if, on reflection, he wishes to raise the matter again, it may be in order to do so when the Committee considers clause 27. As that will not be for a few weeks, there will be more time to consider the points raised.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) said that the scheme should be easy and give maximum freedom of choice for the employee. That is right. We do not wish to compel employers, employees or charities to do the Government's bidding. We wish to encourage diversity. Amendment No. 7 deals with a matter that has already been mentioned by Dr. Barnado's, Help the Aged, Save the Children Fund and other larger charities. Perhaps I can outline our approach to the matter.

8.15 pm

One condition for tax relief for charitable donations under the new payroll scheme is that the donations should be paid over by the employer to an agency which will distribute them to the charities to which the employees wish them to go. Using agencies in that way has several practical advantages. It makes the scheme easier for the employer to run, because he will not need to make separate payments to individual charities to which employees wish to make donations, nor to check that they are properly registered charities. Instead, the agency would act as a clearing house. Some charities which already run payroll deduction schemes with employers have been rather worried about this. Their fear is that, as the clause stands, their schemes might have to operate through an independent agency if the participants are to get tax relief. At the same time, however, it is important that the employee should be able to use the scheme to make his donations to any charity he wishes. He should not be limited to one charity with which the employer already has a deduction scheme.

Therefore, our aim is to give all charities a fair chance to benefit from the scheme. Large national charities, although important and deserving, should not be allowed to squeeze out smaller local charities. If a charity such as Dr. Barnado's or Save the Children Fund wishes to fulfil the agency role and pass on donations to other charities at the employees' request, as well as collecting donations for itself, there is no objection in principle to its doing so.

I stress again that a charity which acts as an agency in that way would have to pass on donations to any charity to which the employees wish to give.

I accept that the clause as it stands leaves some doubt whether an agency charity can collect donations to itself at the same time as donations to others. We shall reconsider the drafting of the clause and, if necessary,

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

introduce an amendment to clause 26 on Report. If the matter can be dealt with under clause 27, we can table amendments in Committee.

I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that assurance and that the Committee will accept that the Government take into account many of the worries and interests that have been expressed. We hope that they can be taken into consideration when the rules and regulations are formulated.

Mr. Yeo: I welcome my hon. Friend's assurances, especially his clarification of the Government's view that it will be desirable to establish a fair number of agencies. I also welcome the possibility of local and regional agencies. The concessions will probably enable funds to flow into local and regional organisations. I am fairly optimistic that, because of the importance of personal contact between the charity and the donors, there will be opportunities for local organisations to benefit.

The only discouraging aspect of my hon. Friend's remarks was the suggestion that it may take some weeks for the Committee to reach clause 27. I had hoped that progress would be such that we would reach it very quickly.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Blair: I must confess that one extraordinary fact that became clear when I studied the matter in detail was the sheer scale of the voluntary sector. For example, there are 150,000 different charities, with an estimated income of between £8 billion and £10 billion a year. That covers income not only from gifts but from grants, fees and other earnings. It is an enormous sector, which receives grants of £350 million a year from local authorities and £180 million a year from Government Departments. Quangos such as the Manpower Services Commission also contribute in total as much as £2 billion a year.

Estimates of individual giving are uncertain, but the Charities Aid Foundation estimates that it could be about £500 million to £700 million a year, to which must be added gifts from companies. We are discussing a vast business. The payroll provision being introduced in clause 26 will increase the income of charities by another £20 million, which is about 0·2 per cent. of their income. I do not cavil at that, because any increase is welcome, but it is a measure of the voluntary sector that it has such a large income.

As I have already made clear, we welcome these measures. However, we seek one or two assurances from the Government. The first is that these measures should increase the resources of charities and should not be simply a transfer of burden from the state sector to the voluntary sector. These measures should complement state provision, not be a substitute for it.

Secondly, we want to be sure that we are increasing the revenue of those charities which pursue genuine charitable objects, and not those which have less to do with charity and more to do with narrow self-interest. We seek an assurance that it is no part of the Government's intention to reduce financial aid to the voluntary sector. If that assurance is given now, I shall leave the matter there. The Minister is nodding, so I take that he is giving me that assurance.

I may have misunderstood what the *Financial Times* quoted the Financial Secretary as saying during a meeting organised by the Charities Aid Foundation:

> "We prefer that responsibility should rest with the individual, so that the state is involved only where it needs to be."

If that means that individuals should pursue self-help and not be beneficiaries of state help, I accept that that is an old Conservative canard with which I am happy to live. However, if it means——

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Why canard?

Mr. Blair: If the hon. Lady wishes to intervene, I shall give way. I see no reason to answer sedentary interventions.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Why does the hon. Gentleman refer to a canard?

Mr. Blair: We believe that self-help would be greatly assisted if there was proper state provision, and that state provision and self-help go hand in hand.

If the Financial Secretary meant that the beneficiaries of state help should come within the voluntary sector in addition to being state beneficiaries, we are happy to live with that. However, if he meant that the donors should be individuals rather than the state, so that the responsibility for vital services is transferred from the state to the voluntary sector, that is a novel and unacceptable proposition. I see the Minister shaking his head, and I take it that he is giving me the assurance that I seek on that point.

One aspect that has concerned many people has arisen partly because of the cuts in local authority funding and partly from the publication by the Office of Health Economics of a document entitled "Crisis in Research". This document shows how much medical research has become dependent upon charities, and that charities are increasingly becoming a substitute for proper state provision. I very much hope that those are only straws in the wind. We talk of and argue about privatisation, but voluntarisation, as it is now called, is a novel proposition and it would be wrong to introduce it under the guise of increased Exchequer generosity to charities.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that a charity is starting up in my constituency because a school that was closed by the Labour county council needs to continue for the sake of children who are suffering from child abuse——

The Chairman: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will stick to the terms of the clause that the Committee is discussing.

Mr. Blair: We wish to ensure that charities are not being given something with one hand and having it taken away with the other.

I very much welcome the Economic Secretary's assurance that the Government will carefully consider representations about their anti-avoidance provisions, which arise under clause 29. I appreciate that we will debate those provisions in much greater detail in Committee, but they affect clause 26 because payroll

deductions will be made only in respect of charities that qualify. The measures may cause more problems than they solve.

I wish to make it clear that we fully support the objective of stamping out bogus charities, and we accept the need for anti-avoidance provisions. We are concerned that desirable objectives may be undesirably attained; the purpose is right, but the means of achieving it could cause many problems. I ask the Government to reconsider their proposals well in advance of the detailed debate that we will have in Committee.

I have formed a view—although I am happy to listen to anything that the Economic Secretary says — that those provisions may catch many innocent charities and fail to catch the guilty. They focus on the method of operation of charities, not on whether charitable objectives are being pursued. There is some confusion about whether the measures are proper anti-avoidance provisions, or whether they are an attempt to redefine charities with bona fide objectives and those without them.

The Opposition would be happy to open up the debate on what are or are not bona fide objectives. Indeed, many people cannot understand why tax relief is given to private schools that charge fees, or why the taxpayer should subsidise those institutions of privilege. In introducing anti-avoidance provisions the Government have opened up the debate on what are or are not deserving charities. I ask the Government to remember that when we question what should or should not be considered bona fide charities.

We welcome clause 26. We are pleased with the assurance that this is not part of a desire by the Government to shift responsibility for the proper provision of services from the state to the voluntary sector. We shall monitor the situation carefully. I hope that the Economic Secretary will repeat the assurance he has given that the Government will carefully consider the representations about the anti-avoidance provision. It would be a tragedy if a measure which is basically welcomed by charities ended up causing as many problems as it solved.

8.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe: I welcome the clause and all that it means for charities. I hope that one of the consequences of it will be to widen enormously the interest that employees take in charities.

One of the most useful functions would be to encourage people who give to charity to take an increasing interest in the way in which the charity discharges its responsibilities. The payroll giving will encourage groups to form in the workplace, and those groups may become activists — shareholders — in the charity's performance. That will go some way towards ensuring that the administrative costs do not run out of control and that those who donate approve of the functions that the charity performs. At present there are too many charities still run by a small group of people, often in a traditional way. The functions of the charity are not clearly known by the people who subscribe to it.

I agree with the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) that we should do everything in our power to remove any abuse of charitable status. The clause will increase the awareness of any possible abuse. In time it will reduce the need for some charities to depend so heavily on central and local government money. The terrible weakness of depending on the state sector—central Government are notable offenders — is that it tends to give its annual grants too late in the year. This makes it extremely difficult for charities to forecast exactly what their income will be. Anything that will make it easier for charities to be independent of state handouts should be welcomed.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I welcome the clause, although not for the same reasons as the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe).

The consequences of the clause will be to turn charities much more into business organisations. They will go away from the old, somewhat fuddy-duddy but caring, important role of charities, run on a voluntary, almost casual basis. This allowed people to get involved without expertise, and that was healthy. The clause will professionalise charities. There will be a much more professional means of tapping money, and donations will be made out of salaries.

We want to consider carefully what is meant by a charity. We should carefully consider what areas are appropriate for charitable activities. Public schools are regarded as charities, but I do not think that the clause will help them because, with present public school fees, it will not enable pupils to buy a packet of crisps. The fact that public schools are regarded as charities suggests a need to review what is a charity. Such a review will be carried out by the Labour Government and it will take away the charitable status of bodies such as public schools.

Mr. Rowe: Did the hon. Gentleman see the report today that it is cheaper to keep a child at a fee-paying school than at some Inner London education authority schools?

Mr. Mitchell: It is cheaper to keep a child in prison than at a fee-paying school, but that does not say anything about the advantages of either institution.

Given the scale of fees, the privilege of keeping children at public schools is one accorded to a narrow, wealthy section of this society. It is wrong that such schools should have the backing of charitable status. It is wrong to subsidise the education of the children at these schools at the expense of the rest of us.

The charitable sector is active and dynamic. Grimsby is a classic example of a centre of thriving charitable activity and endeavour. Such a centre needs the help provided by the clause. It is welcome and should have been implemented some time ago. The clause will enable our charities to operate on similar lines to the American pattern for charitable donations. It will allow those donations to be made with ease and convenience, which I welcome.

I cannot help being suspicious, not of Greeks bearing gifts, but of Spartans bearing gifts. The Government's attitude to the welfare state is Spartan. When I consider the clause in the context of the other things that the Government have done to undermine the welfare state, it makes me a mite suspicious. The clause, though it is welcome, important and benign, may be the preparation for shifting the burden of caring and concern from the public sector on to the voluntary charitable sector. The Government can rush forward and state what wonderful things they have done for charity and then state that they will carry further the process of cuts on which they have been engaged for so long.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) asked whether this was the prelude to a further trimming

[Mr. Mitchell]

of the welfare state. I share his suspicion. It is essential that there is basic state provision in a whole range of areas, not just in traditional areas, but where the voluntary charitable sector has been least effective in alleviating the problems.

The clause will tend to channel money to efficient, well-organised middle-class charities rather than to those which are concerned with the problems of poverty and housing neglect. I do not wish the concentration of charitable activity to be at the expense of the state sector. The Government have cut back in a shameful, shabby, cheese-paring and mean way. Throughout the seven years of Conservative Government the local authorities have been undermined by penalties and by cuts in rate support grant. Now that the Government are supporting the voluntary sector and charitable organisations, we are bound to be a little suspicious of their motives.

I welcome the clause with those reservations. It is a step towards stimulating and supporting a living, loving, caring and altruistic sector of society which makes life better for many people. Charities provide a range of care and concern which are best summed up as Socialism in action, and that is well deserving of help.

Mr. Cash: I welcome the clause. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will not mind if I refer to his excellent speech on 1 May at the Charities Aid Foundation conference. My right hon. Friend set out the philosophy which underpins this provision. His speech gave a clear explanation of its objectives and in a far more eloquent manner than I could.

I am concerned about some of the remarks made by Opposition Members. I detected a certain amount of criticism for voluntarisation, but that is what lies at the root of charitable giving. It is important that employees should be involved. It is obvious that the state has an important role to play, but voluntary giving is the essence of community giving and the loving and caring to which the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) referred.

I hope that Opposition Members are careful not to denigrate the voluntary aspect of giving, because there was the slightest suggestion of that tonight.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): I declare an interest. I have worked for a charity for the past 14 years and I am continuing, albeit in a part-time and temporary role, as its employee.

I welcome clause 26, but I should like to reinforce the anxieties expressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) about voluntary giving not being seen as an alternative to support from the public sector. I find it a slightly unfortunate coincidence that we are considering the clause when many voluntary organisations are threatened with the loss of staff, or even closure, because of the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils and the restrictions on local authority expenditure.

In my constituency, I have examples of well respected voluntary organisations — such as Age Concern, the unemployed workers centre, and the law centre, which have done exceptionally good work—which are all at risk of redundancies or closure because of inadequate support from the public sector. Lest it be suggested that public sector support is not healthy for voluntary organisations, the Committee should be aware of an article in this week's *New Society*, which discusses the matter in some detail and which is based on a study funded by the Home Office and published by the Policy Studies Institute.

According to the article, the study considered what effect statutory grant aid has on the number of paid staff employed, whether it affects the level of voluntary involvement and how it changes the amount of funding obtained from other sources. The evidence is perhaps surprising. It suggests that, far from undermining voluntarism, statutory grant aid has a multiplier effect, which the article identifies. It was found that statutory grant aid led to a greater capacity to obtain more resources from other sources, that it expanded capacity so that the organisation was able to acquire and do more, and that it created a climate of general support for the voluntary sector, which produced a great deal more voluntary activity.

The study compares two areas. The article stated:

"The effects of local government grant aid on an organisation's ability to acquire other resources are nicely illustrated in one example of two local Age Concern organisations: one is in an authority which gives relatively little in grant aid to the voluntary sector in general and similarly little to the local Age Concern; the other receives substantially more grant aid from a relatively generous authority."

Nothing is said about the political complexion of the two authorities, but hon. Members will be aware that more generous support is generally afforded by Labour-controlled authorities, whereas more sparse support is generally given by Conservative-controlled authorities.

The article continues:

"The low-funded Age Concern employs three full-time and three part-time workers and involves volunteers giving an estimated 1,000 hours per week . . . The higher-funded Age Concern employs six full-time and four part-time workers and involves volunteers who give an estimated 3,000 hours per week."

In other words, three times the level of voluntary activity is stimulated by local government generosity to the voluntary sector. It is therefore important to be aware of the stimulating effect of generous public sector support on voluntary initiative and the debilitating effect that reliance on purely voluntary donations can have.

8.45 pm

A substantial number of voluntary organisations are not popular. They do not pursue causes which the public want to support. Indeed, many of them help some of the most unpopular groups in society, such as drug addicts, alcoholics and others who do not engender support and sympathy. Some public sector support for such organisations is vital to maintain their work.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Such a psychological phenomenon is well known. Those who help organisations which are doing good stimulate and encourage them. There is no reason to suppose that assistance dampens an organisation's enthusiasm—quite the reverse.

Mr. Raynsford: I entirely agree. If Conservative Members extend the parallel to economic matters, they will appreciate that a little stimulus and encouragement of the economy can produce considerable benefits, as many of us argue.

It is important to remember that a healthy voluntary sector meets a range of needs not just popular needs, and ensures proper provision. It depends on generous support from individuals, private donors and the public sector. It

would be very sad if the clause were seen to be part of a process of continuing restrictions on public sector grants to voluntary organisations or as a process of transferring support from public to private sources.

Mr. Yeo: I shall not attempt to follow the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) in his wide-ranging choice of subjects, but I find it rather surprising that, in a debate on a clause which is universally agreed to be likely to stimulate private giving, we have to listen to a lot of moans about organisations that run out of funds presumably because they cannot attract such giving.

I was also sorry to hear the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) trying to suggest that there is some conflict between an efficiently run organisation and a caring organisation. I believe that any organisation that is truly caring must care about the efficiency with which it uses its resoures. That is why I was so delighted by what my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) said. If the clause leads to greater scrutiny by donors and the public of how funds are used, it is to be welcomed, to say nothing of its ability to stimulate private donations.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) mentioned the 150,000 charities. I should just like to remind the Committee that there is a larger, but unknown, number of charitable organisations. The 150,000 is roughly the number of registrations issued by the Charity Commission, but there are many unregistered charities which will enjoy the tax benefits of the Finance Bill.

Nobody—not even the Charity Commission—knows how many charities there are in Britain. Indeed, some of the Charity Commission's numbers have been issued to charities that are now defunct, as it will admit if pressed. We have an estimate—£10 billion is a popularly used figure—of the charitable sector's income, but it is only the most vague guesstimate because the requirement for charities to file their accounts is not enforced. We therefore do not have access to the accounts of many charities which enjoy what is effectively a public subsidy through tax concessions.

There is not even a requirement on some charities to file accounts, to say nothing of the fact that such a requirement would be ignored. I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary and his colleagues will, in view of the prominence that charities have been given in the Bill, persuade their Home Office colleagues to see whether we can improve the accountability of charitable organisations. The more that we grant tax concessions—I welcome them—the more necessary and desirable it becomes to give the public proper information about how the concessions are being used.

My second and last point concerns the comment about voluntarisation, which came in the same breath as privatisation. I think it was acknowledged by the hon. Member for Sedgefield that assurances were given from the Conservative Benches that it was not the intention of the Government to use greater private funding of charities as a reason for cutting basic state provision in areas where the state has an obligation to fund. However, I believe that it is important to recognise that there is a form of voluntarisation which is in everybody's interest.

Many organisations provide services on an agency basis for the state. To give as one example the education of handicapped children, many special schools in the country are run with great expertise and efficiency by voluntary organisations. In my view, it is positively desirable that we should encourage more voluntary organisations to provide such services on an agency and competitive basis. There is no merit in saying that all handicapped children who go to a special school should go to a school that is run by a local education authority. There is every advantage in saying that we should have a great plurality and diversity of provision of special education and all sorts of other functions, some by local authorities, some by health authorities, some by education authorities and some by voluntary organisations. If, by encouraging private donations in the voluntary sector, we encourage innovation in the voluntary sector, we will find that this diversity and the plural approach will be promoted.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend accept that Henchurch special school in my constituency was closed by the Labour county council and we had to go along the very route that he advocated, which I thoroughly applaud?

Mr. Yeo: I am most interested in the very important point raised by my hon. Friend.

The question that I want to ask the Opposition is whether they endorse the process of encouraging voluntary organisations to provide services that will be funded by sponsorship from state authorities, or whether they are opposed to the growth of voluntary activity in that way.

Mr. Blair: May I make it absolutely clear, if it has not been made clear already—I should have thought that it had been—that we do not in any way oppose voluntary organisations providing these facilities. What we oppose is the state reducing its commitment in order to allow the voluntary organisations to do the state's work for it. If the two grow in tandem, that is excellent. If there is plurality, that is excellent. What there should not be—this is what voluntarisation means—is voluntarisation in the sense that the state reduces its burden and shifts it on to ordinary members of the public.

Mr. Yeo: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has given that assurance. I therefore hope that, when schools are being closed by education authorities because they are voluntary organisations providing education that will receive the full backing of Labour party members in the House and in local authorities throughout the country.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I believe this to be one of the best clauses of a Finance Bill that Parliament has had the chance to consider for some time. There is no doubt that those who should take the credit are those who have been involved in the long-running campaign to get some relief for charities against the doubling of VAT on their expenditure in 1979. For all that, one regards this as a most welcome addition to the legislation, and I congratulate the Government and Ministers on it.

I think that criticism is not right at this moment. It is fair to say, when the argument against state provision and voluntary provision is taken into consideration, that some charities take enormous pride in their independence. In a peculiar way, the greatest insult that any Government could give to such charities would be to suggest that they, the Government, should take over a part of the assistance. I know this well from my own locality in regard to one of the more remarkable voluntary services in the country, that provided by the lifeboat men. This service often calls upon the individual concerned to make the ultimate charity donation to the well-being of his fellow human beings, as it is not unknown for lifeboat men to give their own lives,

[Mr. David Penhaligon]

yet their fierce independence of Government provision goes back way beyond this Government, the last Government or the Government before that.

I believe that this may well encourage charities to make provision in addition to the provision that is made by the state. If there is any hint that the Government are hoping to make a reduction in certain areas because of the clause, I suspect that they are in for a disappointment in any case. I suspect that the sums involved relative to the provision of care for the mass of people in Britain are very small.

For all that, I think that there will be new and fresh ideas, and that public opinion will be given a new freedom to influence events and developments because of the clause. It will be possible to express ideas which Governments may well be forced to follow, because it will have been demonstrated that in particular areas of care these ideas have been successful. It is not difficult to think of examples. There is, for instance, the hospice movement, which was started in the charity area.

I have no criticism to make of the clause, and I congratulate the Government on introducing it. It is not inconceivable that at some time in the future we may wish to change it a little. Sometimes clauses to Finance Bills have effects other than those originally intended which cannot be imagined by anybody at the time. This can be looked at as the years go by. I hope that the charities will find this effective in increasing their income and that the public will use this new freedom to show the care that I know they have in the development of new ideas. I therefore add the wholehearted approval of the alliance Benches of the clause.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I was encouraged to hear my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury tell the Committee that if clause 26 works as he hopes it will do it will encourage a wide diversity of charitable giving. That theme has been echoed by other hon. Members on both sides of the House, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo).

I was not particularly surprised, but I was concerned to hear the reaffirmation from the Opposition, notably in the speech of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), of the intention of the Labour party, if it has the opportunity, to introduce a statutory definition of what is a charity and what are appropriate charitable objects. I understand their argument about abuse. We are agreed, I think, that it is important to find practical ways to tackle abuse.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) was right to say that the problems of definition are relevant to the working of clause 26, because if clause 29 creates the sort of collateral damage, if I may use that phrase, which many people, including myself, fear, this in turn will impact unfavourably on the operation of clause 26 because people will be unwilling to give if they cannot be assured that tax relief will be available in respect of the charities they wish to support.

We are concerned to find practical ways to tackle the problem of abuse. It will be no surprise to the Committee, however, if I say that I would be most reluctant to see the Labour party abolishing the charitable status of independent schools. That is an argument which it is entitled to put forward and a point of view that one understands. However, it would, in my view, be using a rather heavy blunderbuss and it would be in danger of creating more collateral damage than it would wish to do if it were to set off down the road of trying to achieve a statutory definition of what is a charity. I hope that when the Government come under pressure, which they are now experiencing, and of their own volition come properly to tackle abuse, they will resist the temptation to try to achieve a statutory definition of what is a legitimate or proper charitable activity. That has never been done in our history.

The Elizabethan Statute of Uses did not define charities. The preamble to the Statute of Uses, in sonorous Elizabethan language, sets out and itemises a list of individual charitable activities and provides examples or cases of what is charitable activity or what are charitable objects. They are instances that were pertinent to those days, and the circumstances that applied then—the help or relief then needed—perhaps no longer apply.

There are some rather quaint items in the preamble. We no longer think that it is a proper role of charities to engage in building bridges — at least in a literal or physical sense. We no longer see it as a major role of charities to find endowments for spinsters. However, it is my recollection that both instances are set out in the preamble to the Elizabethan Statute of Uses.

The history of charitable giving and charitable practice in Britain has evolved in case law. There have been no attempts fully to define in statute what is charitable. There have been important judgments—for example, those of Lord McNaghten in the previous century and, much more recently, certain obiter dicta of Lord Hailsham — and these have reinforced the tradition of there not being a statutory definition.

9 pm

The great strength and value of the charitable movement has been in its diversity and innovative quality and its capacity to identify new circumstances where charitable giving is needed urgently and would be valued. The virtue of charities, in my judgment, in our contemporary circumstances is that they should complement the welfare state. I accept the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford). Charities can be complementary to the welfare state in the sense that they have a flexible, innovative and creative quality. They are able to work with much greater precision and much greater speed of response than the relatively cumbersome, broad-brush approach of statutory organisations. Both charities and statutory organisations are needed, and both should work in fashions that are complementary to each other.

I commend to Opposition Members a wise remark that was made by Lord Goodman. Of course, the Labour party changes, and it may be that what Lord Goodman says is no longer viewed so forcibly, but he remarked in his study of charities that

"to define is to confine."

I think that we have all been anxious to ensure that the clauses that relate to charities should be such as to encourage a new flowering and greater diversity of charitable activity. Therefore, I counsel great caution in attempting a definition, even with a worthwhile purpose lying behind it, for

"to define is to confine."

It would be a shame if legislation and policy which would be met with considerable sympathy in all parts of the

House of Commons were to end up in a limiting definition. I am confident that that will not be the upshot of the Government's legislative activity. However, I was nervous when I heard the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), and for that reason I decided to contribute to the debate.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I wish to say plainly that I welcome the uncomplicated way in which the Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) spoke about the clause. It is an important step forward in the provision of resources for charities and I hope, like the hon. Gentleman, that it will have stimulated people's imagination about carrying out charitable causes which they might have felt were impossible because of lack of resources. I hope that the clause will enable them to see their way to undertaking those clauses. In that sense the clause could have a creative contribution as well as an additional one to existing charitable activities as they are now conducted.

I hope that no Opposition Members are surprised that the Government should introduce such a clause, or the package of measures which were announced in the Budget. The Government have done more to help charities than any previous Administration. Direct support for the latest year amounts to over £200 million, which is more than double the 1979 figure. That represents a substantial increase in real terms even after account has been taken of inflation. We have maintained and increased Government support. I can assure the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and others that the measures that we are introducing are not at all prejudicial to funds made available for public service provision. They are additional, and I hope that in many cases they will be complementary.

The package introduced this year is the most substantial package of measures to help charities to have been included in a single Budget. It marks a further step in the process that we have tried to develop during the past few years in order to improve tax relief for giving. In 1980, we reduced the minimum period for charitable covenants that qualified for tax relief from seven to four years. We also introduced the higher rate income tax relief for charitable covenants, originally with a £3,000 limit. In 1983, that limit was increased to £5,000 and in 1985 it was increased to £10,000. It is now to be removed. Charities generally welcomed those moves, and I think that it is a measure of their success that new charitable deeds of covenant seen by the Inland Revenue increased from just under 600,000 to 1980 to 830,000 in 1985. Tax repayments to charities increased by about 85 per cent. during those years.

We have also introduced several other measures to encourage the flow of funds from the private sector to voluntary organisations. We removed the limit for capital transfer tax exemption for gifts to charities within one year of death, so freeing gifts and legacies to charities completely from capital transfer tax. We exempted charities from development land tax, before the tax itself was abolished last year. Exemption from stamp duty was introduced on charitable covenants, and on conveyances and transfer of property of all kinds to a charity. In 1983, we introduced tax relief for an employee's salary costs met by an employer during a period of secondment to a charity. All those changes, together with the changes in the Budget and the payroll scheme in clause 26, helped charities in their different ways.

This year's package includes, of course, arrangements for on-off gifts by companies up to the equivalent of 3 per cent. of their annual dividend. It includes some extension of VAT relief in respect of talking books for the blind, the dress allowance for the handicapped, medicinal products and some other items. But it is right that the debate should focus on the payroll scheme, because in many ways that is one of the most interesting and innovative measures to be introduced to help charities. I particularly appreciate the welcome given to it by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield alluded to the scale of the voluntary sector. The figures are very impressive. I understand that the annual income of charities is now in excess of £6 billion. The hon. Gentleman said that he thought that £20 million extra as a result of this provision represented a small sum. But we are talking about £20 million in tax relief and not £20 million as being the net effect for the charities. We hope that the figure will be three or four times bigger than that. That judgment is made solely on an assessment of how widely the scheme may be used in its initial stages. If it proves successful, we hope that it will be extended. The Treasury would be willing to see the cost in tax relief increased as the commitment to charitable support also increases.

My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary made a speech a few days ago in which he referred to the Government's approach to voluntary giving. Our philosophy is to stimulate charitable support. This measure is designed to that end. After the bit that has been quoted, my right hon. Friend said:

> "In the voluntary sector we see it in the action taken by voluntary organisations up and down the country in many areas of charitable work. Charities operating in a particular field or a particular local area are often better placed to know what the real needs are and how best to tackle them. Of course it isn't just a question of money, because many charities depend heavily on the unpaid voluntary work done by their supporters. But it must be healthy for charities to get their financial and practical support from members of the public and from businesses which take an interest in their work."

That is complementary to the public provision. There is no question of one substituting for the other.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield referred to the problems of abuse and anti-avoidance. Consultations are already under way on that subject. I say that for the benefit of my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) also. The questions of abuse concern financial abuse and not charitable objectives. Although the Treasury has many responsibilities, it does not have responsibility for the Charity Commission, or the whole question of charitable objectives. We are anxious that tax relief given to encourage contributions to charities should not be abused for non-charitable purposes. That is the aim of clause 29. Obviously, we shall have to look further at clause 29 in the light of the representations that have been made. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon was in the Chamber earlier when I gave an assurance to that effect. However, it will be recorded in the *Official Report*.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) welcomed the fact that the clause would widen the interests of employees in charities generally. I am sure that that is right. It is important to encourage the voluntary sector. Giving creates a direct link and a direct interest in the activities that charities provide. That itself is important. If it leads, as my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) said, to greater accountability, that will be welcome. As he said, in charitable

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

expenditure, as in any other, it is important to get value for money. One is not doing one's best by the people who provide the money if one does not use the money economically and in the best interests of those for whom it is provided.

I do not want to enter into a long disquisition about voluntarisation. My view is that the best future for charities and public provision of a charitable and social nature is that, wherever possible, they should work in partnership. For a long time, I was treasurer of a charity on which I think the mother of the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) served. I hope that I have not embarrassed him by saying that.

Mr. Raynsford *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Stewart: Perhaps I am wrong. However, it was a London-based charity. I am glad that the hon. Member for Fulham has taken part in this debate. I think that it was his first contribution to the Committee stage of a finance Bill. I am glad that we have considered the subject of charities. The hon. Member represents a borough in which the charity with which I was concerned was active.

The welcome which has been given on all sides of the House reflects the fact that, through the payroll scheme, we hope that there will be opportunities for supporting local charities which are identifiable by the employees of local firms. It is important that the national charities carry out their work and that the major charities receive the funds they need. I am sure that I am not the only hon. Member who can think of many deserving local causes which ought to be able to benefit from the payroll scheme, provided that they can approach local employers and make their case known. I hope that bodies such as St. Mary's church in Hitchin, the citizens advice bureau in Letchworth, Knight's Templar school in Baldock, and the Royston branch of the St. John Ambulance Brigade will benefit from these provisions. I hope that my hon. Friends and hon. Members opposite will encourage charitable activities in their constituencies to look to the scheme and to obtain funds which they need to develop and increase their charitable activities in the years ahead. I am glad that the clause has been welcomed in this way, and I commend it to the Committee.

Question put and agreed to .

Clause 26 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 15

CHARGE OF INCOME TAX FOR 1986-87

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

9.15 pm

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): I welcome the clause because it reduces direct taxation yet again. We should not look at it merely as a one-off. We must recognise that, since 1979, direct income tax in the lower tax band has decreased from 33 per cent. to 29 per cent. and has decreased to 60 per cent. in the upper tax band from 83 per cent. — plus the 15 per cent. investment income surcharge where applicable. At the same time, the rise in tax thresholds has been greater than the increase in inflation. This means that there is a greater incentive for people to work and for higher earners to remain in the United Kingdom. This is happening against a backcloth of lower inflation, higher productivity and greater efficiency and is to be commended.

We have heard many plans from the other parties. To gauge the validity of their suggestions, it would be helpful if my right hon. Friend offered some guidance on how these plans would affect the tax bands and tax thresholds as detailed in clause 15. I understand that the Liberal party and Social Democratic party proposals would increase public spending by £10 billion. That could be funded by increasing VAT by 11 per cent. to 26 per cent. A letter sent by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), who is present, and the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) who is no longer in the Chamber, to other alliance Members of Parliament states:

> "There are going to be severe public expenditure restraints for some years to come and a number of cherished hopes may have to be delayed.
>
> The truth is, unless we are prepared to argue for substantially higher taxation, which we do not believe to be feasible, we must be prepared to establish strict priorities for higher spending".

The parties seem to agree: we do not want higher taxation. What then is higher taxation? Is £10 billion more higher taxation? Are the Labour party's plans for an extra £24 billion higher taxation? How "high" is higher taxation?

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Just for the record and for accuracy, may I make it clear that the £10 billion is the forecast increase in the fifth year?

Mr. Sayeed: I was going to come to that point. I should not like to misquote.

Mr. Alan Howarth: What will happen in the first year?

Mr. Sayeed: I was going to deal with that point. My hon. Friend has reminded me of the last part of the letter, which states:

> "Real improvements in public sector pay are expensive—a 25 per cent. increase in nurses' pay would cost £750 million per annum; 10 per cent. would cost £300 million . . . 25 per cent. increase in teachers' pay would cost £1·25 billion per annum; 10 per cent. would cost £500 million."

The letter states that the alliance intends increasing public spending by 2 per cent. a year, which in the fifth year would be an extra £10 billion.

What are the implications for the tax bands and tax thresholds if the proposals are not financed by an increase in VAT from 15 per cent. to 26 per cent.? I shall help my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary in answering those questions by pointing out that there are some aspects on which the alliance has said it will not increase spending. No doubt the hon. Member for Stockton, South will tell me if I am wrong, but in an annex to the letter the alliance said that a spending standstill would be imposed on agriculture, law and order, defence and environmental services. I should like my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to exclude the extras that some of the more wild promises of the Liberal party and Social Democratic party suggest because the letter from the hon. Member for Stockton, South and the hon. Member for Truro specifically says that the alliance will not increase spending on agriculture, law and order, defence, and environmental services. That is a suggestion from the alliance.

I would find it helpful if my right hon. Friend could explain the implications of the Labour party proposals on tax threshholds and tax bands. I have heard many different

figures. I have heard that it will cost £46 billion extra in the first year if the renationalisation plans are put through. Others suggest that it will cost £39 billion, and the usual figure quoted on a year-by-year basis is an extra £24 billion.

I accept that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has protested that we have our figures wrong. I should like to know whether my right hon Friend has heard of any suggestions he has made to refute those figures, because I have not. I understand that the lower figure, £24 billion, will increase VAT from 15 per cent. to 41 per cent. I believe in the transfer away from direct to indirect taxation. I do not want to see a large increase in taxation. Therefore, will my right hon. Friend tell me the implications for tax thresholds and tax bands of an increase of £24 billion a year by the Labour party if it gets into office?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I want to take an entirely different view of this clause from that taken by the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed). This reduction of income tax is, in our view, misjudged on two grounds. Firstly, it is regressive and secondly, it is the least cost-effective way of increasing employment and economic activity. That is borne out by the comments which have been made by various expert commentators since the Budget. Typical of those comments were the remarks made by the Institute for Fiscal Studies on this cut in tax. It said:

"of all the obvious ways of cutting income tax, this is the most regressive."

Those with the least will get the least. That is good ground on which to oppose the strategy which the Government have decided upon in this clause.

The evidence shows that less than one quarter of the benefit of tax cuts goes to the poorest half of tax units, as they are inelegantly called, in the working population.

Mr. Cash: Are there, or have there been, any connections, of which the hon. Gentleman is aware, between the comments of the institute and those of the alliance or the party he represents?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: The Institute for Fiscal Studies is widely respected by Conservative Members and has been widely quoted and used by Conservative Members over the years. Is the hon. Gentleman seeking to suggest that the institute has a political prejudice which leads it to reach judgments which are not independent or worthy of attention by Members from both sides of the House? There are no connections between that body and members of the alliance. As far as I am aware the body presents its reports and findings to all parties in the House and I know from the comments that it has made to me that it is the institute's intention to continue to do so, irrespective of the parties involved. The hon. Gentleman does it a great disservice by seeking to suggest that there is any link between it and ourselves.

Single people with an income below £60 a week, under the cut of 1p in the pound, will gain only £0·01 per week as a result of the change in taxation. However, those with gross incomes of between £250 and £300 per week will gain, on average £2·08 per week, while single people on incomes of more than £350 a week will gain almost £2 a week despite the reduction in the real level of the high rate threshold—which, thankfully, is also contained in this clause.

Single earner couples earning below £60 a week will get nothing as a result of the change, whereas those earning between £250 and £300 a week will get £1·72 and those earning over £350 a week will obtain £2·36. Those figures illustrate the regressive nature of the proposal to cut income tax by 1p in the pound.

Despite the pre-Budget speculation that relief would be concentrated on the lower paid through the thresholds or that a lower starting rate of tax would be reintroduced, the Chancellor threw out the sweetener of the 1p in the pound cut in the hope of a further cut of 2p next year and moving towards the 25p foreshadowed in the first Budget of the former Chancellor, now the Foreign Secretary, when he came to office.

Despite those changes, the fact remains that the great majority of taxpayers are paying more than they did in 1978-79 as a proportion of average earnings. The average tax burden of income tax and national insurance remains higher. It is now 21·9 per cent. compared with 20·9 per cent. when the Government came to office. Those figures are for a married couple with two children under 11.

Moving from the average figures to tax units, as they are inelegantly called, in answers to questions that I and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) have tabled, it has been shown that for a married couple with only the husband working, with two children under 11, only those earning up to £77 a week or above £326 a week are now paying less tax as a proportion of average earnings than when the Government came to power. Some 13·18 million taxpayers as a whole are paying more and some 2·14 million are paying less. Even the Government's boasts about the taxation policies that they have pursued are not true. Broadly speaking, people are paying more tax now than when the Government came to office.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman explain how his proposals will help in any way? It seems to me that he is suggesting that people should pay more, not less, tax.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I am suggesting that the proposals in the clause are entirely misdirected if one wants to help those who are suffering most as a result of the depression in the economy over the past few years —if one wants to help those who are suffering from poverty, the 3·5 million unemployed and those with large families. That is the least effective way to help those who are shouldering the major burden of the Government's economic policies; those who have been thrown out of work, particularly between 1979 and 1981, the years that the Government like to forget, when large sections of manufacturing industry were wiped out, which have not been replaced. As a result, many areas such as my own have 30 per cent. and 40 per cent. unemployment, and 70 per cent. of school leavers cannot get jobs. Those are the people whom the Budget should have helped, not those who are fortunate enough to have employment. This was the wrong priority, desirable though lower tax rates might be for everyone in the working population.

9.30 pm

The alliance would like to see lower tax rates in the long term, but with 3·5 million people unemployed, we should help those who are suffering most. The alliance budget proposals contained ways in which lower tax rates could be achieved more cost-effectively than those contained in the clause.

[Mr. Wrigglesworth]

We oppose the cut in income tax, because that is the least effective way to create employment. It is the most expensive and the most sluggish means of creating jobs. The Treasury model shows that the 1p tax cut in the first year would reduce unemployment by only 6,000. After three years, 40,000 jobs would be created. All the models surveyed by the parliamentary unit at Warwick university showed a much higher public sector borrowing requirement cost per job created, a much smaller first-year impact and a bigger flow into imports and hence into current account deterioration.

The Government are getting the worst of all worlds by pursuing this course. We have seen a current account deterioration in the balance of payments figures produced last month. I said in my speech on the Budget, and the alliance warned the Government before the Budget, that the fall in oil prices would give the country a major headache in its balance of payments because if the price of our oil exports is cut, inevitably that resource will make a smaller contribution to our balance of payments. The deterioration has already been shown in last month's figures, and it will continue.

The cut in income tax was the least effective way of creating jobs. Ready reckoners based on the London Business School and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research models show that increases in public capital expenditure — the alliance advocated several ways in which that could be done—and cutting labour costs by reducing employers' national insurance contributions would have considerably greater employment benefits than the method chosen by the Chancellor.

Before the Budget, the alliance advocated cutting employers' national insurance contributions by 10 per cent. in each of the rate bands. Such a proposal was also put forward by the CBI and by Conservative Members. In addition, the alliance suggested capital and current expenditure by the Government that could have been much more effective in creating jobs. Yet the Government chose to go down the least effective path of creating wealth and jobs by concentrating all the money that they had to give away on the cut in income tax. The Government have had an ideological obsession with reducing personal taxation, of which the principal beneficiaries have been the very rich. For the average taxpayer, the burden is still high.

The Government have given away 10 times as much through tax cuts to those who work as they have spent on additional job creation methods. In this Budget, £100 million, as against £1 billion for tax cuts, is being diverted to employment creation methods. That is a miserably small amount, compared with the scale of the unemployment problem facing the regions and the central midlands. Many people in those regions are disappointed with the Government's attention to this problem. They are getting a clear message that the Government's policy is cynically to pursue those who have for their votes at the next general election rather than taking care of the have-nots—those who do not have the jobs or the resources, and will probably never vote for the Conservative party anyway.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): The hon. Gentleman is making a strong case for being opposed to the reduction in income tax. Will he vote against this measure?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the alliance voted against this measure in the Budget debate. The clause also contains the changes in the tax thresholds for the upper rate bands, which mercifully have not been increased in line with inflation, and we welcome that. We do not intend to vote against the clause.

We have made our intention clear. Our reason is central to the difference between the Conservative party—those in charge of the Government—and the Opposition. The majority of people, on all the evidence that we have—we shall see further evidence of this at the polls on Thursday — are more decent and concerned for their fellow citizens, particularly those disadvantaged by unemployment, than are Conservative Members. They will pay the price for their Government's policy in the ballot box not only on Thursday but in future general elections.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I was glad to see the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) come into the Chamber to support the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). I was beginning to be apprehensive that the hon. Member for Stockton, South was finding it a lonely business being a member of the alliance. He was bravely advancing arguments for increasing taxation—the more bravely because I am sure that he will have seen a Gallup poll which found that 69 per cent. of Liberal voters regard it as important or very important that there should be a cut in the basic rate of income tax. His posture is heroic, and no doubt that of the hon. Member for Truro will be so as well.

Given the vehemence of alliance feeling on the subject, it was somewhat surprising to see how thin the alliance presence is in the Chamber. It may be that alliance Members are not here this evening because they are either in Ryedale or Derbyshire, West busy explaining to the electors by how much they will be reducing the rate of income tax if they have the opportunity. It would be no unfamiliar experience to sense a certain discrepancy in what is said by the two alliance parties at different times or by some hon. Members who are here and by other hon. Members who are away campaigning in by-elections. I hope that the hon. Member for Truro, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be able to explain why I am being too cynical.

However, there is a serious point. My rough calculation is that the cost of increasing public expenditure by £10 billion would mean either, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) pointed out, raising the rate of VAT to 26 per cent. or—although my hon. Friend did not mention this—raising the present basic rate of income tax by 8p to 38p in the pound.

I am surprised that the hon. Member for Stockton, South believes that to raise VAT to 26 per cent. or the basic rate of income tax to 38p would be a policy helpful for the unemployed. If the basic rate in income tax was increased, it would drive up the unit cost of employment in business, which is one of our main competitive weaknesses. How could that create conditions in which manufacturing or other firms were better able to employ people? That is a difficult argument to follow.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I listen with great interest to the hon. Gentleman because he is an expert in these matters. having supported the increases in VAT from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent., he is a little like an alcoholic lecturing us

on temperance. He knows that there is no way in which we would increase VAT or income tax to the levels that he is proposing.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Gentleman, who is always fair-minded, will also recollect that, when VAT was increased to 15 per cent., it was in order to make important reductions in the rates of income tax. Again, this is very important to his argument and to the point at issue between us; it was to shift part of the burden from direct to indirect taxation, thereby giving people in work better incentives to improve economic performance. That is how to make an impact on the unemployment problem that we need to deal with. I do not believe that a high expenditure, high taxation, policy would be good for employment.

I wish to put to the House two other arguments in the context of my surprise that the alliance parties want to raise taxation burdens, as they say they do, and in support of the Government's policy of lowering the basic rate of income tax. An important argument for raising thresholds as opposed to lowering the basic rate was that that was the most likely way to make a worthwhile impact on the poverty trap. That is no longer the case now that changes in social security policy which the Government are introducing mean that benefits will be related to income after tax. That is a critical contextual change which means that there cannot be any strong remaining argument against the Government's policy of bringing down the basic rate. I am glad that the Government have set off decisively along this road. The basic rate was 33 per cent., it paused at 30 per cent. for some time, and now the Government have set off again decisively towards the 25 per cent. basic rate which I understand is their continuing objective.

Not only is that the best way to promote improved employment, but there is another important argument in support of a lower basic rate as opposed to higher thresholds. If we are to have democratic discipline on public expenditure, large numbers of people should pay a small amount of tax rather than having society divided into two nations of taxpayers and non-taxpayers. We have seen the problems in local government. If significant numbers of voters do not have to foot the rates bill, they have no objection to local government expenditure rising beyond what is reasonable.

On democratic, constitutional and economic grounds it makes abundant sense, if we are faced with the choice, to bring down the basic rate of income tax and at the same time to ensure that the legitimate objects of public expenditure, the importance and validity of which we all recognise, are paid for consciously by the largest possible number of people who are, on any reasonable judgment, in a position to pay tax because of the level of their income. Therefore, I very much commend the strategy expressed in clause 15.

9.45 pm

Mr. Penhaligon: I always love listening to Members campaigning against public expenditure when public expenditure is suddenly thrust upon their own constituencies. Of all the things that this Government have done, the one that succeeded in aggravating me more than any other was giving development area status to Stratford-on-Avon and leaving out my constituency, given that I am surrounded by 25 per cent. unemployment and am 300 miles from Westminster, and that Stratford knows little of either. It is one of the more remarkable decisions by the present Government, yet I do not remember the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) coming to the House and protesting against the expenditure involved in his constituency. No doubt when it is in order, as I recognise that this comment is not in order at the moment, he will welcome the opportunity of catching your eye, Mr. Armstrong, to express his concern about that view.

It has been said that there are not many alliance Members present, yet 8 per cent. of the parliamentary alliance is here. If that were so for the other parties, there would be 32 Conservative Members, and I can see only 14, and there would be 17 Labour Members. I can see only two of them, and I welcome them both to the debate.

This is supposed to be a debating chamber, where we argue the merits of our case with enthusiasm, vigour and interest. It is not just a voting Lobby machine. We want to listen to the arguments, and we have made our views on this pretty clear. I have nothing powerful to add to the arguments presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), because they are, in our view, quite overwhelming. One must make a judgment on each Budget relative to where one is. We could have an argument on how the Government had got where they were when they introduced the last Budget, and we could argue in some detail that there was no need for them to be in the economic difficulties that they faced, but, recognising that they were there, one must make a judgment relative to that.

Our position is simple. The Chancellor of the Exchequer reached the conclusion that he had £1 billion left over that he could use for some purpose. We reached the conclusion that, given where we were, and not where we would like to think we were, of all the ways that one can imagine using that £1 billion, the Chancellor chose to use it in the way that was least effective in facing the real pressures on the country.

The biggest single problem in Britain today, certainly for those of us who represent constituencies some distance from London, is unemployment. It is a progressive disease. As it goes on, one sees the public getting used to it, and this is in many ways the biggest problem for the long-term future of Britain. We see developing among great swathes of the community the belief that there will be no work for them ever again. If everyone took exactly the opposite view we might have a great deal of civil disturbance, but the fact that many people are beginning to believe that there will be no work for them again is an erosion of the spirit which, on the whole, has made this nation great. In creating that belief, the Government have a great deal to answer for.

Let us suppose that the Chancellor is right in thinking that he has £1 billion to spend on something. In our alternative Budget we argued that there would be rather more than that, but let us accept just £1 billion. Every economic review on which we can lay hands suggests that it is difficult to think of a way of spending that £1 billion which would have less effect on the employment difficulties of the country than the one chosen by the Government.

I have here the figures from the National Institute for Economic and Social Research's review of February of this year. I am an engineer by training and am a litle dubious about the precise nature of these figures that are produced by computer models, but they give one an idea of the thrust and trend of things and one cannot totally dismiss them. The institute believes that in the second year

[Mr. Penhaligon]

the effect of the change in tax will be to cut unemployment by 17,000. It believes that 17,000 jobs will be created by the decison to reduce income tax by 1p in the pound. That is about 26 or 28 jobs per constituency. That is a negligible effect. It is the sort of increase that we have seen in as many weeks, leave alone months, as the terrible statistics have mounted up.

The same review suggests that if the £1 billion is spent on public expenditure the number will increase to 27,000. One can make it a little more than that if one hones the way in which public expenditure is done, but that is 17,000 as against 27,000. If value added tax were cut by £1 billion, 30,000 jobs would be created, but if the national insurance contribution paid by employers were cut by 10 per cent., as we suggested in our alternative budget, 125,000 jobs would have been created. That would at least have covered up the increase which the Government have allowed over the past four or five months, even if it made no real impact on the mountain which has built up since the Conservative party came to power.

I do not understand why the Government made the choice that they did. The alliance is in a peculiar position. On the one hand people accuse us of being irresponsible, and on the other they express surprise at our honesty in voting against the reduction in tax. It is rather brave of the Opposition. It certainly shows more bravery than the Labour party demonstrated. Decisions must be made in relation to the present and, as I have explained in some detail to the good electorates of Ryedale and West Derbyshire, if we had that £1 billion we would not have spent it in this way.

The Government have made a mistake. More than anything else, they have demonstrated that our unemployment is not a matter of chance, something which they did not expect as their economic policies took effect, and that they do not care about unemployment. I do not know what influence the Chief Secretary had on that decision. That is not what my experience over the years in the various matters that we have talked and argued about would have led me to expect. Here, by their own fiscal judgment, the Government had the capacity to spend £1 billion, yet they chose to spend it in the least effective way possible for the greatest social problems that effects Britain. That is amazing. It is a comment on the peculiar last six or seven years of British politics, and it is a comment that is getting through to the British electorate.

I am not one of those who pretend that the Government have money to spend as if there were no tomorrow, but the Government have made a mistake which they will regret. I hope that by next year's Budget they will take note of public opinion, which I suspect they are as well aware of as we are, and which is expressed when given the opportunity, that, given the state we are in, there is a better way of using that money.

Of course, if the British people are asked whether they would like to pay less tax, they will say yes. I would not be the least surprised if quite a few people would say, if asked, that they should pay no tax at all, but we all know that a civilised society cannot be run, maintaining standards and giving people an opportunity in life, on that sort of basis. Therefore, I have no hesitation in saying that to reduce income tax by 1p in the pound is fundamentally flawed. It is wrong. It is one of the great mistakes that the Government have made.

We have already voted against that reduction and if a Division is called we shall no doubt vote against it again, although I am not convinced that that would serve any great purpose.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): With clause 15 we come to what I expect the Government would regard as the centrepiece of the Budget. If the phrase had not been so overworked in recent months, I would have described it as a jewel in the crown of this Budget. There is no doubt from the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget speech and what has been said subsequently that the Government put all the emphasis of the Budget on the reduction in the standard rate of income tax.

Indeed, I am surprised that the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) did not make more of it. He spent much time talking about the public expenditure plans of the Labour party and the alliance. I recognise that there is a connection between public expenditure and taxation, but nevertheless the hon. Gentleman should have taken more pride in his own Government's policy.

It is clear from the Financial Statement and Budget Report that the total cost of £935 million — taking account of advanced corporation tax, which is consequential—is the whole of the Budget and the Finance Bill; everything else is swings and roundabouts. Some people are on both the swings and the roundabouts, and some are on swings but not on roundabouts. There are different effects of different people in different places. We shall pursue the effects of different clauses in Committee, but I wish to make a few important points about this clause.

First, I question the long-term effects of the Government's strategy. In effect, this tax cut is being financed by asset sales, as is the Government's public expenditure programme. I hope that the Chief Secretary will explain what will happen when all the assets are sold. There has been a great deal of public discussion about the consequences of revenues from North sea oil and gas running down as North sea oil and gas run out, but the sales of assets are bound to come to an end before our reserves of North sea oil and gas are exhausted. The Government must eventually face the critical problem of financing tax cuts in the longer term when all the assets have been sold.

Secondly, the Labour party welcomes the boost to the economy. However, as the TUC pointed out in its economic analysis several weeks ago, tax cuts are not as cost-effective as public expenditure increases in reducing unemployment. The same amount of money used for a cut in taxes will not bring about the same number of new jobs as would the same amount of increased public expenditure. Indeed, tax cuts are more likely than an increase in public spending to lead to increased savings. They are also more likely to result in increased imports. Therefore, the boost to the economy will be less for every £1 billion of tax cuts than for every £1 billion of increased public expenditure.

The clause provides for a reduction of 1p in the standard rate of income tax. Although that will cost the Chancellor £935 million, it means little to the individual taxpayer. Indeed, in his Budget speech the Chancellor described the cut as modest. It is important to remind the House about the precise benefits that will be enjoyed by the taxpayer. A married man earning £100 a week whose wife does not work will benefit by 26p a week. If that man earned £150 a week he would benefit by 51p; on £200 a week—

more likely to be expressed as £10,000 a year — by £1·22 and on £20,000 a year by £3·14. Those are Government figures that have been given in answers to questions and cannot be denied. There are many more people earning £100 or £150 a week than there are earning £20,000 a year, and for them increases of 26p or 51p a week mean very little.

The benefits are especially small in comparison with the effects of previous Budgets. The Low Pay Unit, in its low pay review, drew attention to the effects of Finance Bills since 1979 on the marginal rate of tax, including national insurance, for those who are low paid, those on average wages and those who would be regarded as highly paid. In 1978-79, a low wage earner was paying as a marginal rate of tax, including national insurance, about 31·5 per cent. Before the Budget the figure was 35 per cent., and the effect of the Budget will be to reduce it only slightly.

10 pm

For the person earning average wages, the marginal rate of tax, including national insurance, in 1978—was 39·5 per cent. and it has been reduced to only 39 per cent. as a result of previous Finance Bills.

The highly paid person has had a high benefit. In 1978 to 1979 that person was paying a marginal rate of tax of 83 per cent. and that marginal rate of tax has been reduced to 60 per cent.

Mr. Sayeed: Hear, hear.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Member takes pride in those statistics. He must therefore be taking pride in what can only be described as gross inequality, because it is grossly unequal that a person who is already highly paid should have the benefit of a reduction in his marginal rate of tax from 83 per cent. to 60 per cent. when someone who is low paid has had an increase in the marginal rate of tax. The hon. Member for Bristol, East takes greater pride in those figures than he did during the course of his speech, but we regard them as a scandal.

The reason why the low paid and average paid people are less likely to benefit is that national insurance contributions must be taken into account. The low paid are worse off and people on average wages are only slightly better off in spite of the reduction in income tax from 33 per cent. to 30 per cent. as a direct result of the offsetting effect of national insurance contributions. The lower rates of tax for highly paid people are not offset by higher contributions to national insurance because there is a ceiling on those contributions, and if the highly paid people are receiving investment income that income is not subject to any national insurance contributions.

A cut in the basic rate means greater benefits for the higher paid and widens income inequalities. That point has been effectively made, rather surprisingly in my view, by the Confederation of British Industry. It disagrees with the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Bristol, East about a reduction in the tax rate being an incentive. It also disagrees with the claim made by the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) that there are no longer any valid arguments for an alternative to a reduction in the standard rate of income tax.

I do not think I have ever quoted any statement made by the CBI in the past. However, in its Budget analysis it regarded this clause as a debit and not a credit to the Government. The CBI stated:

> "The personal taxation measures are regressive. The Chancellor's 1p reduction in the basic rate will benefit those at the top end of the first income tax band rather than those at the bottom—where, arguably, the need for incentive is greater. The 1p off the basic rate gives somebody on £6,000 a year a reduction of 0·1 per cent. in their tax burden. For somebody on £16,000 the reduction is 0·6 per cent. More must be done to help enterprise at the lower end."

For once the CBI and the Child Poverty Action Group agree about something. The Child Poverty Action Group, like the Labour party, would prefer the Government to extend the long-term rate of supplementary benefit to the long-term unemployed. The Child Poverty Action Group, like the Labour party, would also prefer to increase child benefit by £3 a week. The Labour party also wants to increase pensions by £5 a week for a single person and £8 for a married couple. I will not say anything else about that as it would be out of order when discussing clause 15.

Even within clause 15 the money could have been used differently. The Government could have given higher allowances. The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon does not think there is any valid argument left for higher allowances. I must tell him that the Birmingham chamber of industry and commerce, which is not well known as a Socialist bastion, does not agree with him. In its pre-Budget representations, it advocated in effect that there should be higher allowances.

The London chamber of commerce and industry would go further still. In its pre-Budget representations to the Chancellor, it argued not for a reduction in the standard rate of income tax or higher allowances but for what it described as small income relief similar to the age allowance. The Child Poverty Action Group also argued for that alternative if the Government wanted to use £935 million to alleviate poverty within the tax system. However, those options are not before us, although they would be supported by all Opposition parties, by some Conservative Members and by a wide range of bodies—a genuine consensus—outside the House.

There is a straightforward choice for the Opposition. Either we vote against the 1p cut in the standard rate of income tax or we do not. The Labour party will not vote against it. We have made it clear that we oppose the Budget strategy. We voted against it and we voted against the Second Reading of the Bill. We believe that the Budget and the Bill, to the extent that it puts the Budget strategy into effect, are wrongheaded and misconceived because they virtually ignore the twin problems of poverty and unemployment. We have made it clear that we would give greater priority to higher pensions, a higher child benefit and higher benefits for the long-term unemployed — those who have been unemployed for more than 12 months. We would help people who are in the greatest need and who have least, and we would do it at the expense of those who have most. We define as those who have most the 5 per cent. of taxpayers who have enjoyed the real benefit of successive Budgets and Finance Bills from the present Government. I refer to the people who pay the higher rates and not the standard rate of income tax and have benefited from cuts in taxation on capital as well.

We should also be clear that voting against the reduction in the standard rate of income tax tonight, is not voting for higher taxes to be paid by the richest 5 per cent. because, for once, they have been excluded from the 1p reduction. A vote against the reduction will simply be presented, or rather misrepresented, by the Government as a vote against lower taxes for people on lower incomes.

[Mr. Davis]

I am not clear about what the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party plan to do at the end of the debate. I listened to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), who described the alliance as brave to have voted against a reduction in the standard rate of income tax previously. It appears, however, that there is a limit to its courage or at least that it recognises that it is mistaken, or perhaps it is just inconsistent. I listened carefully for some explanation of why it does not propose to vote against this proposed reduction tonight. We had an explanation not from the hon. Member for Truro but from his twin, the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), who told us that the alliance would not vote against clause 15 because, unlike the Budget resolution, it ensures that benefit is not given to people on the highest incomes. I ask the hon. Member for Stockton, South to explain now the difference between clause 15 which he will not vote against, and the Budget resolution which he voted against on 24 March.

Mr. Penhaligon: None at all.

Mr. Davis: We have a split in the alliance already. The hon. Member for Truro says that there is no difference at all, and he is right, whereas the hon. Member for Stockton, South told us earlier that there is a difference, and he is wrong. There is no difference. The wording is exactly the same. The hon. Member for Stockton, South can wriggle as much as he likes, but he cannot get away from the fact that he claimed that there was a difference when there is none. Perhaps he would like to get to his feet now and tell us the difference. He is avoiding the invitation. I think that we can see where he stands.

The Labour party prefers the more difficult course of explaining to the electorate that we are not opposed to lower taxes and a higher standard of living for people on low incomes. On the contrary, we want to use the money better and in ways that will give the greatest help to people on the lowest incomes; and we would have done other things to help the people on the lowest incomes, including those who pay the standard rate of income tax.

The alliance forgets too easily that many people paying the standard rate of income tax are very lowly paid. Many of those paying the standard rate of income tax have incomes that are below the level of supplementary benefit, and the alliance voted against the cut in taxes paid by those people.

The aim of the Labour pary is to unite working people in the wider sense, including those who need to work and cannot find jobs and those who used to work and have now retired. We refuse to play the game of setting the working poor against the non-working poor. We refuse to jump into the Tory trap with the Liberal party and its allies. We will not oppose this small step towards returning to the lower level of tax to which the low paid were subject at the time of the last Labour Government—a cause supported at the time by the Liberal party and by the hon. Member for Stockton, South in his previous role as a Labour Member of Parliament. It is for them to decide whether they will vote against this tax cut tonight, but the Labour party will not vote against it.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) that this is a significant part of the Finance Bill. Indeed, the short debate that we have had is in direct contrast to the significance of clause 15 in the Bill as a whole. It is not by any means the only significant part, and we shall debate many other significant parts of the Bill in Committee. Nevertheless, it is a key part of the Bill in terms of the amount of tax forgone in the forthcoming fiscal year and of our overall strategy.

I wish briefly to remind the Committee of some of the reasons that we put forward for clause 15. In so doing, I intend to refute the comments made by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth).

First, the record of the Government on tax thresholds is extremely good. As I think is now recognised, we have increased the tax thresholds by 22 per cent in real terms. A good part of that took place in last year's Budget and in the Budget of the year before that. When the hon. Member for Stockton, South talks about the combination of tax changes in this Budget being regressive, I remind him that the arguments are not all one way in relation to thresholds. It is worth bearing in mind that, if the thresholds were raised by the amount that he has in mind, a good proportion of the people who would benefit largely from being taken out of the tax net are single earners and part-time earners. There is no clear argument for saying that one helps the less well-off all the time simply by raising thresholds and not dealing with the basic rate.

Secondly, there is the argument about international comparisons that I quoted on Second Reading. It is clear now that we do not do at all badly on the thresholds and the starting point of income at which one pays tax; we are, however, out of line on the basic rate.

Thirdly—this is an important part of the argument—is the question of the self-employed and unincorporated businesses, 90 per cent. of which pay their tax at the basic rate. When one is trying to encourage the self-employed and unincorporated businesses, it is important to recall that the marginal incentive is what matters to them in building up their business. That is why, once again, we are acting on the basic rate.

This leads me to the main argument for concentrating the bulk of the tax relief this year, over and above indexation, on the basic rate. As the hon. Member for Stockton, South pointed out when quoting some figures given to him in a parliamentary answer, the group that has perhaps least benefited from tax changes in recent years is those in the income bracket of approximately half average earnings to about twice average earnings. It is on that group that the combination of changes most concentrates this year—and rightly so, because I believe that their time has come. It is significant that they are 95 per cent. of all taxpayers.

There are two important reasons for concentrating on that group this year. First, it is important to consider the marginal rate of tax that individuals are paying and the incentives that are given to them to earn more. It is the basic rate that is the marginal rate for 95 per cent. of all taxpayers and for them, therefore, it is an important fact that their incentives are improved when marginal rates are reduced. Secondly, it is still not desirable that for so many of our fellow citizens on modest incomes so much—38 per cent. — is taken from the pay packet before it reaches the pocket. That is why, notwithstanding the academic experts, our proposal for the basic rate is so

popular. That is why I suspect that the Opposition parties are in such difficulty in deciding how to play this tax change.

10.15 pm

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) rightly said in opening the debate, the reduction in the standard rate has been a continuous process. In our first term, the Government reduced the rate from 33 per cent. to 30 per cent. and it is now to be reduced to 29 per cent, which is halfway to our long-term objective of a standard rate of 25 per cent. There has been a continuous process also for incorporated small businesses—I have already referred to the self-employed and unincorporated businesses. Although there is to be only a 1 per cent. reduction in the small business rate of corporation tax this year, it compares with the 42 per cent. rate that prevailed when the Government came to office. There has been a significant reduction in the rate and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East has said, it has been a continuous process.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South argued that we are showing entirely the wrong priority this year. He endeavoured to show that there have been no real reductions in tax on most incomes since 1979. There was a curious paradox in his argument because he was trying to show that tax should not be reduced this year while complaining that in his view the rate of tax was still at the 1979 level. Income tax liabilities in 1986-87 will be about £8 billion lower than 1978-79 rates and allowances indexed to 1986-87 levels. This means that those earning £5,000 a year or less—modest incomes—have had their tax bills reduced on average by about 19 per cent. under this Government. Everyone will pay less income tax in 1986-87 than under a 1978-79 indexed regime. A married man on average earnings would pay £6·91 more per week in income tax under an indexed 1978-79 regime.

Mr. Terry Davis: Does the Minister agree that national insurance is an important part of the calculation and should be taken into account, and was taken into account by the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Mr. MacGregor: I have seen all the figures that have been given in answer to various parliamentary questions on this issue. I accept that we have not yet succeeded in bringing down the combined rate to the level that we would wish. However, the 1p change in the basic rate of tax is a further move in that process.

It is important to disinguish national insurance contributions from income tax. National insurance contributions are made on a pay-as-you-go basis to pensions, on which we have preserved our election pledges—indeed, we have done more than that. If the hon. Gentleman's intervention reveals the line that he will take, I hope that he will not be so churlish as he was when replying to the debate, but will positively support what we are trying to do in reducing the basic rate of tax this year.

Mr. Davis: I am sure that the Minister would not wish inadvertently to mislead the House of Commons. He has said that the combined rate has not been reduced by as much as the reduction in income tax. In fact, it has increased for many, especially for those on the lowest incomes.

Mr. MacGregor: In making comparisons with 1978-79, it is important to take into account increases in earnings and changes in take-home pay. The marginal rate of tax has been reduced from 33 per cent. to 29 per cent.

Mr. Davis: That has been more than offset.

Mr. MacGregor: For some, yes. However, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made changes last year to national insurance contributions to benefit the lower income groups.

Mr. Davis: For the low-paid and those on average earnings, the marginal rates of income tax and national insurance, when taken together, has not declined. Indeed, it has increased for the low-paid, and the position is the same for those on average earnings.

Mr. MacGregor: No. The important point is the proportion of income and earnings that is taken away in the combined national insurance contributions and tax. Although the figures have not changed as much as I should like, that is the course that we are following, and that is why we say that the long-term objective is to get the basic rate of income tax down to 25 per cent.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South, rather surprisingly, said that the principal beneficiaries of the change this year would be the very rich. He must know that we have quite deliberately kept the increase in the thresholds for the higher rates below indexation to ensure that that does not happen this year. Indeed, I join the hon. Member for Hodge Hill in saying that the hon. Gentleman gave a tortuous and remarkable answer when explaining why he was not going to vote against the clause—because he was in favour of the higher rate elements in the clause. I accept that most are not indexed, but there has nevertheless been an increase. Yet again, we have seen a typical example of the hon. Gentleman trying to have it both ways.

In reality, the hon. Member for Stockton, South does not want to vote against the clause for two reasons: first, he does not want to highlight the fact that the SDP and the Liberals are trying to oppose the 1p reduction in the basic rate; and secondly, he could not muster enough support among his colleagues to vote against it.

On Second Reading, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that there were five other ways in which the Government could have dealt with the £1 billion-odd that is involved in cutting the basic rate. He listed increasing public expenditure, raising child benefit, raising tax thresholds, introducing a reduced rate band and cutting the basic rate. He then concluded, just like the hon. Member for Hodge Hill, that by far the worst of those options was to cut the basic rate. He seemed to make it clear that he would have preferred any of the other options.

In view of that, and the whole way in which the hon. Member for Hodge Hill spoke today, it is astonishing that the latter does not intend to vote against the clause. It is even more remarkable that the Labour party has given a pledge not to put the basic rate back to 30p. Thus, although Labour Members rail against it and argue that it is wrong, and the wrong use of priorities, they do not have the courage to fight against it or to put it back to 30p. That shows the paucity of their arguments and the frailty of their attack on the clause.

[Mr. MacGregor]

In not voting against the clause, the Labour party is accepting that it will forgo more than £1 billion in tax over a full year. Consequently, it is relevant to look at its spending programme. my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East asked me whether I had received any further suggestions from the Labour party to refute the £24 billion spending programme. The answer is that I have not. The Labour party does not have the courage to vote for higher taxes, but it wants much higher spending.

Mr. Terry Davis: We are in favour of higher taxes for those who can afford them. We have made it clear that we will recover the £3·6 billion that has been given to the Chief Secretary's rich friends.

Mr. MacGregor: That £3·6 billion has already been spent many times over.

Mr. Davis: I have already told the Chief Secretary how we will spend that money. We will spend it on increasing the pension for a married couple by £8 a week, on increasing the pension for a single person by £5 a week, on increasing child benefit by £3 a week and on extending the long-term rate of supplementary benefit to the long-term unemployed. If the Chief Secretary costs that, he will find that that £3·6 billion more than covers it.

Mr. MacGregor: Of course, that is a long way short of £24 billion. However, I must get on, as I know that the House is anxious to come to a conclusion, and we have debated these issues before.

The hon. Gentleman has not even costed his £3·6 billion correctly. The hon. Gentleman is talking not about someone's rich friends but about a group who will benefit considerably from the 1p basic rate change. As he knows, that means a marginal rate of 70 per cent. for anyone with a taxable income above £18,600. Those are the people who will have to cough up to meet the cost of the £3·6 billion.

I turn to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East about the SDP and the Liberals. Previously the Liberals had the courage to vote against the 1p reductions. My hon. Friend asked me to look at the size of the expenditure programme that the Liberals and the SDP have put forward. He quoted from a letter which was published in *The Times*. For the benefit of many of my hon. Friends who were not present in the House, I shall quote from it:

"It is understood that Alliance leaders have been stung into tough action by the Government's damaging charge that Labour commitments could cost as much as £24,000 million."

At least the hon. Member for Stockton, South has learned the lesson of the dangers of committing oneself to a heavily overspent programme in a way that the Labour party has not. That stung the hon. Gentleman into consulting his colleagues. I understand that that is what happened. The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) sent a joint letter which stated:

"There are going to be severe public expenditure restraints for some years to come and a number of cherished hopes may have to be delayed.

The truth is, unless we are prepared to argue for substantially higher taxation, which we do not believe to be feasible, we must be prepared to establish strict priorities for higher spending, to consider phasing in the more expensive changes, to identify areas where savings can be made, and to seek new solutions to problems."

Is the article in *The Times* correct? Have the hon. Gentlemen sent a letter to their spending colleagues?

Mr. Penhaligon: That is the truth.

Mr. MacGregor: It is now on the record.

The hon. Member for Truro was kind to me earlier. May I repay the compliment by saying that I always enjoy my debates with him, because at least he is frank and honest. However, I must tell him that some of his hon. Friends are giving him a reply, and it cannot be an encouraging one. This morning, we read in the newspapers that an SDP policy group—perhaps that is only the SDP and is not directed at the hon. Member for Truro — proposes a scheme for distributing shares in nationalised industries free to every member of the public instead of privatising them through a stock market flotation.

Leaving aside whether that is a sensible way to proceed, we must question, if we give away assets for nothing and continue to tax actual earnings more heavily — that is what the Liberals and the SDP propose—whether people value things when they get them for nothing. It has been made clear in the same article that, in line with the recent injunction by alliance economic spokesmen, policy proposals have to bear in mind the tightness of funds if the alliance parties were to gain a share of power. It is stressed that this spending has yet to be allocated a place in the SDP's overall list of priorities.

So now we have a new concept, a new way of fudging, of getting out of the gap between spending and raising the tax. The alliance would put forward a proposal, so that everyone would sit up and take notice, and say, "We do not know whether we can afford it." That is typical of the SDP and the Liberal party. They try to be all things to all men but do not face up to the need for real choices.

The decision by the alliance to oppose the cut this year in the basic rate will not take it far on the road to an extra £10 billion. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East asked what that would be. It represents another 9p on income tax in the fifth year. The other policies which the alliance put forward will not achieve much economic growth. We must still expect a substantial increase in taxes.

We have tonight seen the Labour party, the Liberal party and the SDP wriggling all over the place to explain why they will not vote against clause 15; they do not know how to explain away their position. Our position is clear. We are in favour of clause 15. We are in favour of the basic rate cut to 29p. We believe that it is right for the economy. That is why I commend the proposal to the House.

10.30 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I would not wish the Committee to agree that the clause should stand part of the Bill without making two points that I have made many times in recent years. It is easy to see the difficulties of the Opposition parties in finding the courage to vote against a cut in income tax, but I question whether the Government will be able to finance the redistribution of income at the level that the public expect with a further 4 per cent. reduction in the contribution of those in work.

First, I believe that it is humbug, now that we have put the national insurance contribution on an earnings-related basis, to keep it as a contribution separate from income

tax. I believe that the income tax and NIC should be combined, not in a single income tax but in a single national insurance contribution, so that the income tax becomes the insurance contribution made by every citizen.

Secondly—I first made this point in 1971 when I was on the Committee on the Finance Bill — the Government's objectives should be to give every individual the maximum possible incentive to create wealth and to simplify the tax system as much as possible. Therefore, contrary to the comments of the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), I believe that the Conservative's Government's objectives should be to abolish higher rate tax altogether. I hope that that remark will be quoted. I hope also that my right hon. and hon. Friends will bear in mind the fact that this would be a reduction in taxation from which everyone would gain and no one would lose.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 15 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

To report progress and ask leave to sit again.—*[Mr. MacGregor.]*

Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

Power Plant Engineering (Gateshead)

Motion made, and Question proposed, that this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

10.32 pm

Mr. Bernard Conlan (Gateshead, East): I shall address my comments to particular problems that affect my area, but they concern the whole of the power plant engineering industry. For many years, there has been a general shortage of orders, recurring redundancies, little confidence and a severe drop in the morale of those working in the industry. Those problems affect the industry nationwide.

In 1984, more than 1,200 people were employed at Northern Engineering Industries' nuclear power plant. Today, 137 people are employed there. That is a substantial decrease. I doubt that the company's viability will continue with such a small workforce at that major plant. This will be the third redundancy announcement since December last year. If the problems continue, the company will bleed to death.

The problem is not new. Indeed, a Central Policy Review Staff report in 1976 said that the industry faced a serious problem. The report pointed out that the power plant industry faced grave threats and added:

"There must be a Government commitment to a firm, steady ordering programme, starting as soon as possible, for the home market."

Little has been done about the problem since that statement was made in 1976.

The industry is faced with the difficulty that the Sizewell inquiry has been continuing for a long time and that the inspector has not yet reported. If newspaper reports are to be believed, he will not present his report until later this year. It is clear that the inspector's recomendations will be controversial and that the Government—the same would apply to any Government —will not be prepared to tackle the issue until after the next general election. That being so, it is clear that conditions in the industry will continue to get worse, and firms such as that in my constituency will disappear.

Should this local firm go out of existence — remembering that there have already been 1,200 to 1,300 job losses in Gateshead — the problems for the unemployed in the area and for the town will get worse. It will also present more problems for the nation, because the skilled teams needed to construct the high technology boilers and other equipment that comprise modern power stations will no longer be available. Britain will then have to turn to the Americans or even the Japanese. What a sad day it will be if we, with our proud record in the construction of highly efficient power stations, have to look overseas for our requirements.

I have for long believed that we should have a sensible mix of nuclear and conventional power stations. The recent tragic events in the Soviet Union should not deter us from pressing ahead with our nuclear programme. Our designs are quite different from theirs, including the station at Chernobyl. The AGRs produced at Gateshead have a safety record second to none, although there are doubts about the safety capacity of the PWRs, and that is the issue at Sizewell. We have only to recall the events at Three-Mile Island to realise that such doubts are well founded. Unless the Government are prepared to take firm and positive action to save the industry, we will live to regret the passing of one of the leading and major industries in this country.

The nuclear power plant of Northern Engineering Industries is possibly one of the most modern in Europe. In 1982 the Prime Minister was responsible for the official opening of the new nuclear facility. I recall that on that occasion, in declaring the new facility opened, she promised the workers—more than 1,200 people then—that they would have a bright and promising future. What hollow words they were. What was the bright and promising future that the Prime Minister promised to the workers in Gateshead a mere four years ago? Nearly 1,200 of those workers have already lost their jobs. Those words sound pretty hollow now in the light of experience.

At about the same time, in a great roar and fanfare of trumpets, the Government announced that it was their policy to embark on a programme of ordering one new nuclear power station a year up to and including 1991. What has happened to that policy? Not only have the Government not fulfilled that promise; they have not ordered one station. Indeed, the major redundancy in Gateshead occurred in 1984 when work on the Torness and Heysham power stations ran out. The Minister will not want reminding that it was not his Government who provided the work for Gateshead. It was provided by the Labour Government in 1978, who took the initiative and ordered those two new power stations.

What shallow and hollow words we have heard from the Government about providing work for this important industry. I have carried out some research, and I have found that since 1979, bearing in mind the fact that the Government have not provided work for any one power station, NEI has contributed to Tory party funds—if not to the Tory party funds, it has contributed to the front organisations — more than £200,000. In view of the Government's record for providing work for NEI, the shareholders of that company might consider that the £200,000 has not been cost effective.

My final plea to the Minister is that he must reappraise the position of this vital industry. Tomorrow the Minister should place on his desk the 1976 report of the Central Policy Review Staff and consider the report's finding that the industry requires a steady improvement.

10.44 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): People are nervous, if not afraid, as a result of the Chernobyl disaster, and understandably so. The full realisation of the devastating and deadly effects of unleashed nuclear energy has been brought home—literally—by an accident in a part of the world previously unknown to most people. This, following the accident at Three-Mile Island in America and constant doubts surrounding the nuclear installations at home, has quite naturally made people, to say the least, sceptical about the advisability of continuing with the development of nuclear power stations in this country on their very doorsteps.

Until such time as we are able to convince them— that can only be when we are convinced—that nuclear energy can be not only harnessed but kept harnessed, then why should we expect them calmly to accept future developments of this kind? Despite the continued reassuring noises from Ministers, and the Prime Minister

herself, all the signs are that the ordering of any new nuclear power stations must be thrown into doubt, or at best delayed, as a result of Chernobyl.

Where does this leave those who work on the manufacturing and production of power station equipment? That is what they went to know, and an answer for NEI is urgently required. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Mr. Conlan) has already outlined the decline in the work force over the past four years. This followed the official opening of the facility in 1982 by the Prime Minister herself, who on that occasion forecast a secure future for the company.

The future was not, and is not, secure. More highly skilled men and women will be thrown out of work on Tyneside. Unless and until the Government have the good sense to plan properly for the future energy requirements of the nation, based on fuels and technology that are both plentiful and proven, the electrical engineering industry will be unable to plan and maintain the present skilled work force that has been so badly depleted over the past seven years.

Even the present functioning nuclear power stations could be providing more work if they were being properly maintained instead of being allowed to fall into disrepair and giving rise to concern. Even so, the skills of the work force at NEI are not entirely restricted to nuclear-related production, and the inventive and technological genius of the technicians are not entirely confined to nuclear energy. They can contribute to the provision and refurbishment of conventional stations and, more important perhaps, to the much needed, but sadly lacking, research into alternative and safe sources of energy.

The northern region is still reeling under the blow of losing the auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel, which was so badly needed by Swan Hunter. This threatens to aggravate an already record unemployment level, to say nothing of the human suffering that that implies.

While the local authorities continue to make every effort to preserve and expand employment, by attracting companies such as Nissan and Komatsu, through grants and incentives to new and existing business, every job that they attract is swallowed up by yet more bad news resulting from the Government's neglect to recognise properly the skills that we have, and the contribution that those skills can make to a properly planned future.

The problems faced by NEI are symptomatic of the problems of the electrical engineering capacity. In the not-too-long-term future, we look forward to the return of a Labour Government that can fully utilise the skills of our people by expanding our economy and planning our energy needs. In the meantime, we look to the Government to cast aside the dogma and begin doing something positive for the industry and the country. I hope that the Minister will give a satisfactory reply to the points that have been raised.

10.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I thank the hon. Members for Gateshead, East (Mr. Conlan) and for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) for raising a question which is obviously very much in their minds. I shall try to respond to the points that they have raised.

I was particularly interested to hear the hon. Member for Gateshead, East recount some of the history of the industry. He was right to point out that his remarks were geared towards describing the factors which have affected the whole power plant industry and not just one section of it. He was also correct to review the order position and to consider projections for the future.

The hon. Member for Tyne Bridge referred to a phenomenon which many of us have shared—the need to keep together groups and teams of skilled people so that a capability is not lost to the economy, not just for local but for national reasons. Therefore, I shall consider with them how the United Kingdom power plant industry has developed. We all agree that it has been through a very difficult period, with a low rate of home ordering for more than a decade. I shall begin by reviewing the situation on that front.

In the 1970s the utilities were commissioning plant at the rate of about 2,000MW per year, and this represented a major workload for the United Kingdom plant manufacturers in the 1960s and the 1970s. Of these orders some 58 per cent. were won by GEC, while some 42 per cent. went to Northern Engineering Industries in the north-east. However, since 1973 only three orders have been placed: the Drax completion coal-fired station and the Heysham II advanced gas-cooled reactor station which were won by NEI, and the Torness AGR station which went to GEC.

So what are the prospects for the future? Of course, proposals for new generation plant must come from the electricity supply industry. The Government will examine each consent application on its merits. The Scottish boards are unlikely to need new major generating capacity for a number of years.

Power stations are usually built to provide generating capacity to meet demand, either because existing power stations have reached the end of their economic life and so have to be replaced or because of a net increase in demand. However, Sizewell B pressurised water reactor power station was originally put forward as a substitution project, since the cost of generating power from the proposed new station showed an economic return compared with generation costs from existing power stations. Since Sizewell B was first mooted, demand for power has increased and this has turned the original case for substitution into a requirement for replacement capacity.

Nevertheless, the Central Electricity Generating Board has stated that it does not intend to seek consent for other new power stations until the outcome of the Sizewell inquiry is known. Sir Frank Layfield has been faced with a formidable task in carrying out the inquiry and in compiling his report. The inquiry was extremely wide-ranging, lasting 340 days—the longest ever planning inquiry in this country. Sir Frank has indicated that he hopes to deliver his report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy in September of this year. My right hon. Friend has said that he will reach a decision as soon as possible after receipt of the report, and arrangements are being made for the Department of Energy to make an urgent examination of the report when it is available.

As hon. Members have noted this evening, any discussion which mentions nuclear energy must now take note of the Chernobyl disaster in the USSR. Although it is not part of the main topic of this debate, I am sure that hon. Members would wish me to comment. There are three major points to make on the relevance of the disaster to the United Kingdom.

[Mr. John Butcher]

First, the plant at Chernobyl is unlike any reactor type operating or planned in the United Kingdom, including the existing Magnox and AGR stations and the proposed PWR station. In the United Kingdom our system of licensing for nuclear plants puts safety first, and under that system a station such as Chernobyl would simply not have been found remotely acceptable.

Secondly, inquiries such as that into Sizewell B are not a feature of life in the Soviet Union. This Government decided that there should be a full public inquiry at Sizewell, at which any body with an argument against nuclear energy was able to put forward the fullest evidence and the fullest reasons for its point of view.

Thirdly, safety of course is, and will remain, the paramount consideration in the development of nuclear power in this country. Provided nuclear power stations can be built safely, and to time and cost, they offer very real economic benefits through cheaper electricity for both domestic and industrial users.

If formal consent were granted, Sizewell B would provide the opportunity for major orders for United Kingdom manufacturing industry earlier than any other possible new station. A very high proportion of the hardware would be supplied by British companies; the CEGB has estimated that only 7 per cent. of the total cost of the Sizewell B project would be for contracts placed abroad, and only about half that would be for plant and equipment.

The CEGB is also considering the possibility of ordering a new coal-fired power station for commissioning in the mid-1990s, but has not yet made a specific application. A reference design for a new type of 900 MW unit — compared with the present largest size in the United Kingdom of 660 MW—which might be used for such a station is being developed by the CEGB, the NCB and manufacturing industry. In more general terms, there will be a need for new power stations to replace existing outdated capacity in the 1990s and beyond.

Taking all these prospects together, I believe that, in the medium term, the United Kingdom power plant manufacturing industry can look forward to improved business prospects on the home front.

That having been said, the industry's concern about the home ordering programme is understandable, but the timing of orders must remain the responsibility of the generating boards. I must emphasise that any new power station which was not fully justified on economic grounds could be expected to have an undesirable impact on electricity prices, which would adversely affect both the domestic and industrial user, the power sector included.

Turning to the overseas market for power plant which is an integral and important component of order prospects, this has naturally been an important part of the activities of United Kingdom companies over the past few years. For example British companies have undertaken major power station projects in the Sudan, in Korea, Hong Kong, South Africa, India and Brazil. There have also been many more minor projects, which still involve substantial United Kingdom content, of which the supply of plant and equipment from United Kingdom factories and the provision of design and engineering services is worth collectively many millions of pounds. Total exports from the United Kingdom power generation machinery and equipment sector in 1985 amounted to £675 million, which shows an excellent performance.

The Government have placed considerable emphasis on helping United Kingdom companies to win business overseas, and especially in developing countries. The financial package is just as important as the price and quality of the equipment offered to overseas clients. The financial expertise of the City has been used by British compaies in the power sector—as by other capital goods exporters—to get together commercial financing on the best possible terms. I pay tribute to the financial services available to our exporters. However, there has been an increasing tendency in recent years for major projects overseas to be won with soft finance. While the Government deplore this growing international trend and would prefer to see an end to mixed credit activity, we are determined that our companies should not be at a disadvantage. Accordingly, the Government announced to the House last November that we intended to provide a new soft fund, in addition to the existing system of grants under the aid and trade provision. Our objective is to double the business won by British industry with the help of mixed credits over the next few years from the present level of about £250 million a year to about £500 million a year.

Traditionally, the power sector has been a major beneficiary from ATP. From the date of introduction of the scheme in 1977, over 20 projects in the power sector have been won with ATP. This amounts to about 40 per cent. of all the ATP granted to British companies. This large proportion reflects the importance of power projects in infrastructure development. Developing countries cannot progress unless they have adequate, secure and reliable generation of electrical power, with the necessary systems to transmit and distribute that power to industry, to commerce and to domestic customers.

Although the market for major power projects overseas has been very slack over the past few years, showing a considerable decline from earlier levels, I understand that most commentators in this country and abroad see an increase in activity in the years ahead, reflecting the needs of developing countries. Falling oil prices and the trend towards lower world interest rates will provide an additional boost. The Government will respond by continuing to support the power sector through ATP, including the use of the soft loans facility. It is open to companies in the sector in Gateshead to benefit from our support, as it is to companies elsewhere.

As the industry has looked increasingly overseas for its livelihood in recent years, so it has become apparent that to compete effectively major investment has been needed to update and improve products, production equipment and methods and the working practices of the industry. The industry has responded with large investment programmes, assisted where necessary by the Government under the provisions of the Industrial Development Act and the Science and Technology Act. Since April 1979 support for the power plant engineering industry throughout the country under the Science and Technology Act has amounted to some £21 million with some £3·5 million of that amount offered to companies in he Gateshead area. With Government assistance at an average of around 25 per cent. this would represent an investment in innovative products and processes of more than £80 million by the industry; and I pay tribute to that.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Millions of pounds more have been invested by the industry without recourse to the Government.

Under the Industrial Development Act and its predecessor, since August 1979 support offered for investment schemes within the power plant engineering industry has amounted to some £24 million, of which £2·5 million has been offered to Gateshead firms. This assistance is specifically aimed at capital regeneration on both regional and national benefit grounds. With an average Government input of some 10 per cent. it means that the industry has invested some £240 million of capital, all aimed at ensuring a competitive product able to win overseas orders on price, delivery and technical excellence.

As with all Adjournment debates, I have listened carefully to the arguments that have been put forward. I congratulate the hon. Members for Gateshead, East and for Tyne Bridge on raising this important issue at what has transpired to be a topical moment. I fully understand the hon. Gentlemen's reasons for wanting to defend the continuation of those teams of skilled people in their constituencies, and I shall ensure that the points that they have raised tonight are well lodged with my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Energy.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 7 May 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CHANNEL TUNNEL BILL

Ordered,

That the Petitions of the Dover Harbour Board and Sealink U.K. Limited against dispensing with the Standing Orders, in the case of the Channel Tunnel Bill, be referred to the Standing Orders Committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Libya

1. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the position of United Kingdom nationals in Libya.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Our consistent advice since April 1984 has been that British citizens choosing to live and work in Libya do so on their own responsibility and that consular assistance and protection is limited. We have more recently advised the withdrawal of dependants and non-essential staff. Our consul in Tripoli is in close contact with representatives of the British community, which now numbers around 3,500.

Mr. Douglas: I thank the Secretary of State for that reply. Does he concede that some events have taken place since the United States bombing? In view of the statement by the United States President and Vice President in the last few days about the possibility — indeed, the probability—of the United States taking action against terrorists or state-sponsored terrorism in other countries, such as Syria, what advice does the Foreign and Commonwealth Office offer to British nationals in Syria, Iran, Iraq and elsewhere?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is a far-ranging question, founded on a number of far-ranging assumptions. Our advice to travellers in all the areas where tension has increased or where there is a risk of terrorist violence—for example, in certain parts of Beirut—is to make their own judgments, at their own risk, and on their own responsibility.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: As my right hon. and learned Friend would not wish British citizens to be expelled from Libya solely on the ground that they are British citizens, can he confirm that no Libyan students have been or will be expelled from this country solely on the ground that they are Libyans? Does he agree that the training of Arab students in Britain is very much in our long-term interests?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I assure my hon. Friend that action taken in respect of Libyans, whether students or otherwise, who are resident here is on the basis of evidence and because of security considerations, not on the basis of any general categorisation.

Mr. Beith: Does the Secretary of State believe that British nationals living abroad or at home are safer from terrorism now than they were before the bombing raid, or does he share Secretary of State Shultz's assessment that Colonel Gaddafi may be more dangerous now than before?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have not seen that assessment, but there is no doubt that the risk of terrorism and of injury to innocent people as a result of terrorism is more likely to increase in the face of inaction by countries such as ours.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that some of us will be not be particularly sympathetic to British nationals who find themselves in difficulties in the future, because it has been made abundantly clear that risk is involved in going to Libya and they will be extremely foolhardy to go there at this time?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I take note of what my hon. Friend has said, and I understand his point. We have, of course, no legal means of preventing British citizens from visiting or remaining in Libya, but our advice is clear.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Will the Secretary of State nevertheless make it clear that British nationals who have married and now live in Libya will have no impediment put in their way or in the way of their families if they wish to come here to visit their relatives?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In today's world many people are parties to cross-national marriages and Governments have to react to situations and treat them sympathetically. There is no question of any retaliation by ourselves or of any measures being taken against peopele solely because of their nationality or marital status.

Mr. Dickens: Is it not true that, by and large, British nationals living in Libya are contributing something to that country — whether it be special skills, experience or business acumen—in return for stability and, perhaps, even their own safety? Therefore, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the safety of British nationals should not always cloud the judgment of our foreign policy?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I take the point made by my hon. Friend. Of course the safety of British nationals cannot be the only consideration in foreign policy. However, I hope that the day will never come when it can be said that Her Majesty's Government are heedless of the safety of subjects of this country.

Debt Crisis

2. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have been held in the European Economic Community Foreign Affairs Council concerning the debt crisis; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 27 January, at which we discussed debt. We recognised the seriousness of the debt problem and endorsed the case-by-case approach as the right response.

Mr. Home Robertson: After all the self-congratulation at Tokyo, is it not time that the Minister addressed herself to the growing problems of those countries which cannot service their overseas debts without making their impoverished people even poorer? Should there not be some action on the state-sponsored terrorism of the international banking system?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman is in a slight muddle. We have already given grave consideration to the problems of the poorest countries. That is how we came to give £987 million in retrospective adjustments to 21 of the poorest countries. Only the Federal Republic of Germany has a better record.

We have ensured that grant-aid to countries with an income of less than $790 per capita per annum is given in each and every case. In the light of the Baker initiative, on which good progress is being made, we shall consider all that we can do to help those countries which are prepared to put their own houses in order.

Mr. Watts: Did the Foreign Affairs Council discuss the impending debt crisis within the European Community following the failure of the budgetary discipline arrangement? Will the Government exercise the United Kingdom veto on any proposal to raise the 1·4 per cent. VAT limit?

Mrs. Chalker: It is fair to say that when we speak of the debt crisis we mean nations which are far poorer than any single nation of the collective entity of the European Community.

There is no provision under the Fontainebleau agreement for any increase in the 1·4 per cent. ceiling before 1988. Any proposal for such an increase would require the unanimous agreement of the member states, including the United Kingdom, and approval by national Parliaments. I see no sign whatsoever of that happening.

Mr. Foulkes: I suggest that the Government do not understand the urgency of the problem. Has the hon. Lady seen the report last month by Morgan Guarantee, which showed that the net outflow of funds from Latin American countries alone was £123 billion? Does that not make a mockery of the aid that we give them? Will the Government suggest to our European partners that there should be some sort of collective action, such as interest capping, so that this problem can be dealt with properly?

Mrs. Chalker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that not only do we constantly consider in the margins what can best be done to help, but that we have especially been considering the oil exporting debtors who become major beneficiaries under the Baker plan.

It is essential to keep a sense of balance and to persuade those debtors to pursue sound economic policies and to manage their internal strengths in such a way that the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development can help them in the best possible way. We are certainly a full party to that.

Mr. Marlow: In view of the deliciously forthright answer that my hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts), will she confirm that if the European Community were to come up with a budget that reached the 1·4 per cent. ceiling, and then asked for a supplementary budget, the Government would turn that down flat, too?

Mrs. Chalker: Once again, my hon. Friend is dreaming dreams of things that he might like to happen, but which we intend to ensure will not happen. If, beyond the supplementary budget proposed, which is the 1·4 per cent. ceiling, a further supplementary budget were to come forward, it would depend on exactly why it had come forward. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] I say that with sound advice. I must tell my hon. Friend that when there has been a 25 per cent. fall in the value of the dollar against the ecu, which could not have been foreseen, we must cope with reality, not blind theory.

Nicaragua

3. **Mr. Torney** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ask the European Economic Community Council to condemn any United States military aid to the Contras in Nicaragua.

14. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding doctors in the Contra forces in Nicaragua being involved in the torture of political prisoners; and what action he has taken.

15. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by the European Economic Community Council to the United States of America about its policy towards Nicaragua.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): We and our European partners have repeatedly made clear our conviction that the problems of Central America can be resolved only through a negotiated settlement based on the Contadora objectives rather than by armed forces. We have ensured that our views are well known.

As regards doctors, we have received no reports that doctors in the Contra forces have been involved in torture.

Mr. Torney: Is the Under-Secretary of State aware that Congress is likely to approve military aid to the Contra forces? Does he agree that that is contrary to international law? What does his colleague the Foreign Secretary propose to do about it?

Mr. Eggar: We advocate a political solution, through the Contadora process, rather than a military solution. We believe that Nicaragua should negotiate seriously on the basis of the Contadora objectives and avoid actions such as the recent incursion into Honduras.

Mrs. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman renew his efforts to obtain more information, because of reports from Nicaragua to the effect that doctors are being used for the purpose mentioned in my question? Will he mobilise the forces of Amnesty International, and perhaps the BMA, which have been instrumental in collecting a large amount of material, not necessarily from Nicaragua, but from different parts of the world where doctors have been used in the implementation of torture?

Mr. Eggar: We have made extensive inquiries. We have no such reports in our possession. If the hon. Lady has such information. I should be grateful is she would make it available.

Mr. Park: Does the EEC intend to sit back and allow the Contadora process to be sabotaged by increasing United States involvement in the guerrilla war in Nicaragua?

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the Community supports the Contadora process and believes that progress can be made through political dialogue and economic co-operation. The Twelve in the Community are in close touch with the Contadora group. The Community's role is to provide support for the Contadora group's efforts. The economic co-operation agreement, which was signed in Luxembourg in November, offered practical support.

Sir Peter Blaker: What is the attitude of the Government of Nicaragua to the peace treaty which was proposed recently by the Contadora group?

Mr. Eggar: Obviously we want Nicaragua to end its support for guerrillas in neighbouring countries and to make progress towards a genuine pluralist democracy. We believe that the suspenson of certain civil rights in Nicaragua last October was a step in the wrong direction.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: What advice does my hon. Friend think the European Community Foreign Affairs Council should give to local authorities, such as Leicester, which intend to twin with Nicaragua? Will that help, or hinder, the Contras?

Mr. Eggar: I do not think that the conduct of Leicester city council is a matter of great concern.

Mr. Heffer: Will the Government inform their colleagues in America that they should consider United States history? The United States gained power after a struggle against the British, and only later did it have democratic elections. Nicaragua is in precisely the same position. Nicaragua has a democratically elected Government. The United States of America should not support those who are trying to overthrow a democratically elected Government who are carrying out policies on behalf of the Nicaraguan people.

Mr. Eggar: The armed forces and nearly all the national institutions in Nicaragua are under the control of the Sandinista political party. The draft constitution under discussion in Nicaragua provides for the formalisation of these powers. Does the hon. Gentleman really believe that that is a democratic system?

Mr. Winnick: If international terrorism is to be condemned, as it should be, why did the international summit in Tokyo not condemn the way in which President Reagan and the United States Administration are arming and supporting the bandits who are carrying out terrorist acts against the elected Government in Nicaragua? Why are there double standards?

Mr. Eggar: There was a brief discussion among the Foreign Ministers at the Tokyo summit about the position in Central America. All the Foreign Ministers supported the efforts of the small democratic nations of Central America to make democracy work in their region. Mr. Shultz reiterated the United States' continuing support for the Contadora proposals for peaceful resolution of disputes in the area.

Mr. Key: I understand the American sphere of influence argument and recognise that our influence in the area is now limited to Belize, but is my hon. Friend sure that the Americans understand that there is growing concern in the United Kingdom about the Nicaraguan situation, which appears to be deteriorating?

Mr. Eggar: I do not entirely accept the premise on which my hon. Friend's question is based. However, we have made clear to the United States Government our views on the position in Central America.

Mr. Healey: Did the Government remind President Reagan at the Tokyo summit that his proposals for military aid to the Contras involved the United States in a most blatant form of state terrorism, because the Contras have engaged in horrifying atrocities, including torture and mutilation, against innocent women and children, and they are now accused in the United States of drug running and of plotting the murder of an American ambassador in Central America? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, so long as President Reagan supports such activities, he has no right whatever to claim to be an opponent of state terrorism?

Mr. Eggar: I think that the right hon. Gentleman is trying to draw a parallel between the United States' action in Libya and its action in Nicaragua, which simply does not stand up to any examination. Gaddafi has committed the Libyan Government to organising and directing a worldwide campaign of terrorist violence against innocent people outside Libya. In Nicaragua, the Contras and the Nicaraguans have resorted to armed struggle against their own Government. The Contras do not seek to advance their cause by terrorist acts in third countries.

Departmental Vehicles

4. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether all vehicles owned or operated by his Department are British-made; and what proportion of vehicles owned by his Department's staff and purchased with his Department's financial assistance are British made.

Mr. Eggar: The diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office owns and operates a total of 1,061 vehicles at home and abroad. Eighty-seven per cent. of these are British made. Of the 338 Diplomatic Service officers who received financial assistance towards car purchase during the last financial year, 74 per cent. bought British cars.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my hon. Friend agree that those who represent us overseas should promote British products and drive British cars when they are bought with public money? What steps will my hon. Friend take to increase those percentages of British-made goods?

Mr. Eggar: As I hope I have already made clear, representational officers are expected to run British cars, wherever possible. In some areas that is not possible, because of lack of servicing capability, and so on. I should point out that if all British companies and individuals

owned and ran the same percentage of British cars as are run by Diplomatic Service officers, the British motor industry would not be in its present difficulties.

Terrorism

5. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed the question of international terrorism with the other Foreign Ministers of the European Community.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The most recent discussion among Foreign Ministers of the Twelve was on 21 April. Terrorism was also dealt with by Ministers of the Interior in the Trevi group framework on 23 and 24 April. I discussed it at the Tokyo summit with those European Foreign Ministers who were present. The outcome among the Twelve and at Tokyo has been agreement on specific measures for effective national and collective international action against terrorism.

Mr. Sumberg: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take an early opportunity to tell his European colleagues that the decisions reached at Tokyo, which were reached largely through the efforts of our own Prime Minister, have widespread support in the House? Will he consider extending those measures to all countries engaged in state-sponsored terrorism, not merely Libya? In that context, will he confirm the report in *The Times* today that the Foreign Office has asked for the withdrawal of a Syrian diplomat who has been engaged in terrorist activity in this country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not face any difficulty in following the first part of my hon. Friend's advice, because my European colleagues were well aware of the commitment of Her Majesty's Government to measures of this kind and to secure the endorsement of them in Europe. It is clear that the measures agreed in Europe and Tokyo are intended to be applied in suitably proven cases to other examples of state-sponsored terrorism.

On the second point, I can only say that there are police investigations involving the custody of a man called Hindawi who is charged with conspiracy to murder and attempting to destroy an aircraft in service. Investigations are continuing. I do not want to say anything which might prejudice the judicial process, but the Syrian ambassador called at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office last week at our request, and again on 5 May this week at his request. I can confirm that we discussed the El Al bombing incident with him, but I can give no further details while the investigation is continuing.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: Will the declared intent at Tokyo, and possibly in Europe as well, to limit the number of diplomats from certain countries require an amendment to the treaty of Vienna?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No, Sir. The right hon. Gentleman will understand that we took action two years ago in respect of the near total establishment of the Libyan People's Bureau. We have taken action more recently in connection with the reduction of numbers, and we remain ready to do so in suitable cases.

Mr. Jackson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there is a real risk that all the welcome action being taken against terrorism in the middle east may be vitiated by the lack of progress in tackling one of its fundamental causes—the Palestinian problem?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my hon. Friend will recall, in the debate on this subject a couple of weeks ago the point was made strongly from both sides of the House that we need to address ourselves to the search for progress on the peace process in the middle east. It must be said that at present the opportunities for such progress are not looking too hopeful, but we shall continue to look for them.

Mr. Nellist: In the Foreign Secretary's discussions on 21 April, did he relate to the other Foreign Ministers the content of his letter to me of 17 April which defined state-sponsored terrorism as being where a state recruits, trains and finances terrorists? Over the following three weeks, in refusing to condemn the United States' military aid for the Contras in Nicaragua, was he aware of reports which appeared in *The Observer* on Sunday, which described the assassination of Nicaraguan people by the Contras by a method known as the tie—the victim's throat is cut and his tongue is pulled out over his breastplate to form a tie? What other description is there for assassination such as that than state-sponsored terrorism?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman makes a long connection with an elaborate account of some incident he has seen reported. On the substance of the hon. Gentleman's question, I have nothing to add to what my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary has just said.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: In dealing with terrorism, my right hon. and learned Friend will know how vital it is to obtain agreement on extradition procedures. What further steps does he propose to take to persuade the Americans of the importance that we attach to the Senate passing the Extradition Treaty Bill?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. Extradition procedures are important. That is why improvement of those procedures was one of the points specifically agreed by the Tokyo summit. In that context, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I underlined to the President and the Secretary of State the importance that we attach to ratification of that treaty. They left us in no doubt about the commitment of the American Administration to that end, and they and we are doing everything possible to secure the right answer from Congress.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Will the Foreign Secretary exercise some caution, even in the justifiable indictment of Libya, so that he does not fall into the trap of putting all the Arab nations against us, in order to satisfy the aims of the United States-Israeli axis?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is no question of the Government taking any action to satisfy the aims of that or any other axis for its own sake. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman's point that it would be wrong to allow the justified condemnation of Libyan state-directed terrorism to lead us into any general position of confrontation or disagreement with the other Arab states.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, in contrast with the European Parliament, when the 20 countries of the Council of Europe met at their Assembly recently, when the subject of Libyan terrorism was debated, many of them seemed thoroughly ashamed of their previous inaction and

recognised both the importance of the Atlantic Alliance in this context and the need for more robust action by all of them to combat terrorism?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am delighted to hear the report given by my hon. Friend. We welcome support for our position from the European Council assembly, as from everywhere else.

Heads of Government (Assassination)

6. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government take when foreign Heads of Government are assassinated.

Mr. Eggar: We have consistently condemned the assassination of Heads of Government. Most recently, I am sure the whole House will have had feelings of profound sympathy for the Swedish Government and people following the assassination of Mr. Palme. In that case we offered all possible assistance to the Swedish Government.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to the Minister for his reply. In view of the well-documented evidence of CIA involvement in assassination attempts, successful or otherwise, in Cuba, Chile, Guatemala, Iran and Nicaragua, has he made it patently clear to the Americans, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, that we would not support any assassination attempt on Colonel Gaddafi, covertly or otherwise? While he is at it, will he also make it clear to the House that no British personnel are involved in any part of the world in attempts to destabilise countries or assassinate legitimate Heads of State, whatever we might think of them?

Mr. Eggar: I really do think that the hon. Gentleman is being even more absurd than he normally is. I cannot go further than say what I have already said—that of course the Government consistently condemn the assassination of Heads of Government.

Mr. Gow: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would have been no grievous loss to the civilised world if Colonel Gaddafi had died in the raid on Libya?

Mr. Eggar: Obviously my hon. Friend has his own view of Colonel Gaddafi's contribution to Western civilisation.

Terrorism

7. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list those countries in respect of which Her Majesty's Government have evidence that they harbour or give assistance to terrorists or terrorist organisations.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It would be both misleading and unwise to publish a list as requested by the hon. and learned Member. Evidence frequently does not constitute proof, and much of it is, of course, of a very sensitive nature. The continuing campaign against terrorism requires careful evaluation of evidence of this kind.

Mr. Janner: As the Foreign Secretary has frequently said that there is both evidence and proof that Libya trains, recruits, harbours and assists terrorists, is it correct that Libyan planes are still permitted to land in this country, and if so, why?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Because there are still continuing air services between Libya and most other countries of western Europe. There is still a substantial British community in Libya, which is dependent to some extent on those services, including those coming from this country. Taking account of all the circumstances, we have not concluded that the point has yet been reached when that situation should be changed.

Mr. Michael Morris: While it may not be appropriate to publish a list, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there is growing concern about the situation in Tamil Nadu, in particular over the succouring and training of terrorists in that state within the sovereign state of India? The result has been that three British nationals died last weekend in the bombing of Colombo airport, and we hear today that there are further terrorist activities in Colombo. Is it not time that we made strong representations to the Indian Government to stop that training in Tamil Nadu?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not know that one should necessarily reach the conclusion from which my hon. Friend starts his question, but clearly we are concerned with the continuing violence resulting from terrorist incidents within Sir Lanka and have discussed the matter with the Indian Government.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Are not those Governments who refuse to act by banning kidnap insurance assisting terrorism? Will the Foreign Secretary meet the Irish Foreign Minister to find out what happened over the incident of the Bell shipping lines executive who was stopped at Dublin airport with £300,000 in his suitcase and who was found to be working in conjunction with Control Risks Group Ltd., a London company? Will he find out what happened during that incident and why that money was being taken to the Republic of Ireland?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If the facts as retailed to the House by the hon. Gentleman are correct, clearly they deserve interested attention, whether by the prosecuting authorities, by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, or by me. I shall draw the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friends.

Mr. David Atkinson: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets his Irish counterpart, will he ask him when he proposes to put to an end his country's counter-trade with Libya of food for arms for the IRA?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no evidence whatsoever to suggest that the Government of the Republic of Ireland are concerned with the supply of arms to the IRA.

Mr. John David Taylor: Is the Foreign Secretary satisfied with the progress towards the extradition of wanted Irish Republican terrorists from the United States of America?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That question has already been raised with my hon. Friend the Minister of State. It is an important question. I repeat that we have impressed upon the American Administration the importance attached by Her Majesty's Government to ratification of the treaty that is now before Congress and, with their help, are doing everything possible to impress that point upon Members of Congress.

Mr. Wilkinson: As state-sponsored terrorism is a belligerent act which affects the security of all democracies, not least those in western Europe, why have

my right hon. and learned Friend and Her Majesty's Government, under the Brussels treaty, not responded, through the Western European Union, in a concerted way to this threat? Why have they responded so negatively to the proposal for a counter-terrorist task force, as proposed by the President of the Assembly of the WEU, Mr. Caro?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We discussed this matter with the President of the WEU Assembly at the WEU meeting in Venice last week and made plain to him the view of the WEU council that there is no need to establish a fresh international body such as the task force recommended by the Assembly, because there are more than enough agencies already at work that are involved in co-operation. However, at the WEU council meeting we underlined very strongly indeed the need for effective and early action by members of the WEU and the European Community along the lines already undertaken.

Dr. Godman: Surely there should be no partiality in the condemnation of the sponsorship of terrorism? Has the Foreign Secretary in recent times brought to the attention of Mr. Shultz the deep disquiet felt by many people in this country over American-sponsored terrorism in Nicaragua?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That point has already been dealt with by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in answer to a number of questions, but I make the distinction yet again that there is a total difference between those terrorist organisations that are dedicated to the infliction of indiscriminate damage on innocent people in third countries and the context in which Nicaraguan subjects are engaged within the frontiers of Nicaragua.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I accept my right hon. and learned Friend's view that there should not be a list, for the reasons that he has given to the House, but will he accept that his Department might do more to advise people in this country who are going to countries such as Sri Lanka of the dangers that they might encounter, bearing in mind the sad experience in Colombo at the end of last week? I point out to my right hon. and learned Friend that two of my constituents, Mr. and Mrs. James French, were in the plane that blew up, but, fortunately, they escaped serious injury.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. We extend advice about the dangers of travel to different parts of the world. In many cases, however, we cannot give specific advice about a specific hazard that is likely to arise. In addition, we underline the need for people who are about to travel to study closely the conditions in the countries to which they are going.

Mr. Healey: Which view does the Foreign Secretary share — that expressed yesterday by both President Reagan and Vice-President Bush, that Syria would be a suitable candidate for possible unilateral American military action, perhaps involving the use of sea-launched cruise missiles, that of Prime Minister Craxi, that further unilateral military action against a supposedly terrorist state would be in clear breach of the understanding reached in Tokyo, or that of Prime Minister Nakasone, that every country that was represented in Tokyo has the right to interpret the new communiqué as it wishes? What is left of the Prime Minister's great achievement in Tokyo after that?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: After that confusing question, it would be extremely interesting to know just which of the alternative propositions put by the right hon. Member is the one to which he attaches himself. Does he wish to see effective action against terrorism? The commitment entered into by the seven communiqué countries was a commitment on effective, collective international action, and not related to the prospect of military onslaught on any given country.

Mr. Sayeed: As Sinn Fein is the political wing of a proscribed terrorist organisation, why do we not put our own house in order and proscribe it as the Southern Irish do?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That question raises different considerations, although I understand the importance of them. One important point to be taken into account in this context is that conflicts that arise in Ireland and Northern Ireland take place in the context of a society with a fully representative democratic system.

Mr. Beith: Will the Foreign Secretary now answer the question about Syria? Does he recognise that it provides a haven for particularly ruthless terrorists, and if he does, does he advocate bombing or some other realistic and more promising means to deal with the terrorist threat from there?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The measures that we advocate, and to which the summit countries and Community countries are committed, are collective, effective international actions similar to those set out in detail in the communiqué from Tokyo and from the European Community. Whether those measures should be taken against any given state will depend upon whether there is plain proof of state involvement in terrorism, suitable to deserve the response suggested.

Iran-Iraq War

8. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the prospect of an end to the Iran-Iraq war.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tim Renton): Regrettably, there are no signs of any early end to the Iran-Iraq conflict. We believe, however, that the international community must continue its efforts to secure full implemention of Security Council resolution 582 which calls, among other things, for an immediate ceasefire. We continue to lend full support to the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his search for a negotiated settlement.

Mr. Thurnham: In the light of recent allegations that European arms dealers are rushing to supply arms to Iraq, will my hon. Friend confirm that he remains opposed to British companies selling arms to either country in this tragic conflict?

Mr. Renton: I can assure my hon. Friend that all applications to export defence-related equipment to either Iran or Iraq are subject to the granting of an export licence and we refuse such licences when we consider that the equipment could significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the situation. I wish that other Governments would follow our strict example.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Minister advise the Prime Minister, as she prepares to go to Israel later this month,

to condemn the flow of arms to both parties in this dispute, but especially those arms that might be sent to Iran by way of Israel?

Mr. Renton: I have no doubt that the question of the Iran-Iraq dispute will be discussed during the forthcoming visit to Israel by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I also hope to discuss it when the Secretary-General of the United Nations is here this coming weekend.

Mr. Dickens: Is my hon. Friend aware that before the days of the Shah of Persia, Britain kept peace in the middle east for 400 years? In this case, what steps are Her Majesty's Government taking, with our vast experience in the middle east and our diplomatic skills, to effect a ceasefire?

Mr. Renton: I am glad to be assured by my hon. Friend that in past centuries Britain had such a great influence over the Ottoman empire. Through our diplomatic missions in the Gulf, and through our membership of the Security Council, we have continual discussions with all the parties in the middle east who could bring this tragic conflict to an end. It is worth reminding the House that more than 500,000 people have been killed in the Iran-Iraq war. I hope that the Islamic conference and the Arab League will add their efforts to those of the United Nations Secretary-General and so bring the conflict to an end.

Mr. Anderson: I should be interested to know how the Minister reconciles his declared policy on arms supply with the supply of Chieftan spare parts from an RAF airfield. What investigations have the Government made into the allegations that a bu" 'ing in Victoria street is the main entrepot for the procurement of arms for Iran? What counter have the Government made to American allegations that we are failing to co-operate with them over the extradition of British nationals who face indictments in the United States for illegal arms supply to Iran? What investigations have been made about allegations of the illegal use of diplomatic bags by Iran for the export of arms?

Mr. Renton: I reassure the hon. Gentleman that recently no new applications for the export of arms that would significantly prolong the conflict on either side have been approved. If the Iranian procurement office wished to export war materials, that would have •› be covered by an appropriate licence. We have not received any applications for such licences. If we obtained evidence of illegal activity in that context, we would take the appropriate steps without delay. I am unaware of any request for extradition from the United States along the lines mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, but I shall pass on his remarks to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary for consideration.

Middle East

9. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on recent discussions with King Hussein of Jordan or Mr. Peres, the Prime Minister of Israel, regarding the peace process in the middle east.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had useful talks with King Hussein on 17 April. She and I had similarly useful exchanges with Mr. Peres during his visit to London in January.

Mr. Latham: Since King Hussein has apparently lost patience with Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, and since the Israelis will not deal with them, will the Prime Minister use her forthcoming visit to Israel to effect a revival of Mr. Murphy's diplomatic initiative to bring Jordan and Israel directly together under the appropriate international auspices?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to acknowledge that we are in a period of reassessment following the suspension of the Jordanian-Palestinian joint action. It is right that we should actively consider ways of taking the peace process forward. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will take advantage of her visit to Israel later this month to discuss what practical steps can be taken.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Does the Foreign Secretary know whether Yasser Arafat and King Hussein have fallen out? Unless the PLO is included in any discussion, there will be no peace in the middle east. Would it not be more useful for the Prime Minister, when she goes to Israel, to make it clear that she intends that the PLO will be involved in negotiations?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we do not accept that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, although since the Venice declaration is has been clear that it should play a part in the negotiations. The key is that the Palestinians should choose an outcome which they can willingly accept, and the most frustrating deficiency in the present position is the absence of any effective group to represent the Palestinian side of the case.

Mr. Soames: What representations has my right hon. and learned Friend made to the Government of Israel about the outrageous abuses of human rights meted out to the Palestinians on the West Bank?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have on a number of occasions engaged in frank dialogue with the Israeli Government about conditions on the West Bank, including human rights, and have made it clear to them that Israeli settlements there are illegal and an obstacle to progress.

Mr. Heffer: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that there can be no question of the Palestinians choosing an outcome until they have the right to establish a Palestinian state? Will the Government put pressure on the Jordanians and the Israelis to try to reach an agreement as quickly as possible for the establishment of such a state, because I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) that there can be no peace in the middle east until such a state is established?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not want to be misunderstood. We support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. That is of crucial importance. That means that they should be able to choose what attainable constitutional arrangements they can willingly accept. In those circumstances, we constantly urge, probably more actively than any other country, upon the Governments of Jordan and Israel and others the need for them to move towards a negotiating process that takes account of the rights of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Walters: Bearing in mind that terrorism, of which we have heard a great deal this afternoon, is an ugly

symptom of the underlying problem in the middle east, will my right hon. and learned Friend do everything in his power to persuade the United States Administration to spend less time talking about the symptom and more doing something about the problem, possibly in an even-handed manner?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Quite apart from the connection between terrorism and the long-standing dispute in the middle east, it is obviously of the highest importance for all concerned to take every possible step to try to bring that dispute to a conclusion, and we certainly urge the importance of that in discussions with the United States as well as others. I agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Anderson: When the Prime Minister makes her welcome visit to Israel, will she visit the West Bank, and if so, which Palestinians will she meet there? Will she take the opportunity of putting in clear terms to the Israeli Administration our fears that the Shamir Administration, which is likely to come into being in October, will lead to a new and intensified settlements policy?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It would not be in the interests of security, among other things, for me to give any insight into the programme foreshadowed for my right hon. Friend, but, regardless of the changes in Administration that may take place in Israel, whether as a result of rotation or otherwise, I am sure that she will continue to make plain to the Israeli Government the need to take account of the Palestinians and the conditions which they face on the West Bank, along the lines of my earlier answer.

European Community Policies

10. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the development of Community policies in the European Community.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall continue to work to make the Community competitive in the new technologies and to seek early completion of the internal market, reform of the common agricultural policy, a reduction in the burdens on business, improvements in world trade and strengthened co-operation in foreign policy.

Mr. Knox: Will my hon. Friend impress on her colleagues at the Treasury that one of the main stumbling blocks to the development of the Community in economic terms is Britain's failure to join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS?

Mrs. Chalker: I think my hon. Friend knows well that we are ready to join the exchange rate mechanism when we judge the conditions to be right. However, the balance of the arguments still seems to be that it is not in our interests to do so. When it is, we shall join.

Mr. George Robertson: Last month the Foreign Secretary described the fight for budget discipline as being a fight without end. In the light of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee's report of today, it seems obvious that the fight is about to end with yet another special levy on the British taxpayers in order to bail out the farm budget of the European Community. Just how long does the hon. Lady believe that this fantasy world of finance will hold up, and how long will the British rebate be safe?

Mrs. Chalker: The British rebate will be safe. Thanks to the pressure of budget discipline in this year's price fixing, there will be a reduction of some £500 million in CAP costs in 1986-87. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that we cannot ignore the 25 per cent. drop in the value of the dollar vis à vis the ecu. We must ensure that the budget council scrutinises the supplementary budget rigorously for potential savings. The Community must stay within the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling in 1986-87, in accordance with the Fontainebleau agreement. Every possible effort is being made to stop surpluses at source so that they do not eat up so much of the budget.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Why were the terms of the Luxembourg compromise not incorporated in the Single European Act?

Mrs. Chalker: There is no need for the terms of the Luxembourg compromise to be incorporated in the Single European Act. It is not altered in any way by the European Communities (Amendment) Bill or the Single European Act. It remains as it was and it will continue to be used if and when necessary.

Uganda

11. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in the light of the recent change of Government in Uganda, he has any plans to increase the number of places available to Ugandan Civil Service trainees at the Civil Service college; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: President Museveni's Government have asked us to resume our programme of help to the Ugandan Civil Service. An adviser on public administration is now in Kampala to discuss how best this can be done. We shall ensure that the college helps as far as possible to meet Uganda's need for assistance in public administration.

Mr. Wainwright: Would not a really substantial offer of places for administrative training be a timely and practical support for a new Government who have inherited a terrible legacy of terrorism, violence and disorder? Would not such an offer partly compensate for the British Government's previous provision of military training to Obote's terrorists until a few weeks before he fell?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that Uganda needs help to train her civil servants. That is exactly why we have an adviser on public administration in Kampala to discuss with the Ugandan Government how help can best be provided. Whatever considerations he comes up with will be considered by the Ugandan Government and then by us. We shall help in whatever way we can.

The second part of the hon. Gentleman's question was uncalled for. British Military Advisory Training Teamtraining was suspended in July 1985, but it was intended to make troops responsible and to act with decision. It was stopped for well-known reasons. The training that the present Ugandan Government under President Museveni have sought is similar to BMATT training, which has been greatly valued across Africa and which is constantly being asked for by nation after nation.

Nuclear Test Ban

12. **Mr. George Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment to the current obstacles, besides the question of verification, to the negotiation of a ban on nuclear tests.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Any negotiations would need to deal with difficult questions such as scope, duration and compliance, but the key issue is verification. A resumption of negotiations would be premature until there is progress on that.

Mr. Robertson: The Prime Minister told my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition a fortnight ago that the Government wanted a comprehensive test ban treaty established. If verification is the obstacle, is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the technical problems have already been overcome, to the satisfaction of all the other countries involved in the non-proliferation treaty, and that the Russians have offered on-site inspection—an unprecedented offer, which they have resisted previously? Why are the Government continuing to drag their heels? Is it that they want to go ahead with their own nuclear testing programme and have no interest in a test ban treaty?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government want progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty, but we do not accept that recent arguments, including those advanced by the hon. Gentleman, invalidate the conclusions about verification that are to be found in the paper that we presented at the conference on disarmament in July last year.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: In the light of the mendacity and evasions that we have experienced regarding the Chernobyl disaster, is it any use reaching any conclusions with a power such as the Soviet Union without verification?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is no doubt that the absence of candour by the Soviet Union in reporting or disclosing information about the Chernobyl disaster underlines the importance of the verification issue, which raises similar questions.

Mr. Deakins: Does the Foreign Secretary accept the growing American view that we cannot ban nuclear testing so long as we rely on nuclear deterrence and the existence of nuclear weapons?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We believe that it should be possible to achieve agreement on a comprehensive test ban treaty, and we are certainly committed to seeking progress in that direction.

Afghanistan

13. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the situation in Afghanistan following his recent visit to south-west Asia.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I listened to representations from Afghan refugees, and discussed the matter with the Pakistan Government and with the provincial Government in Peshawar. The presence in Pakistan of 3 million refugees poses very real problems. I visited a refugee hospital and camp, and was deeply struck by the human consequences of the war. The key to peace is the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. To that end we fully support the talks at present being held under United Nations auspices.

Mr. Moynihan: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Mujahidin must be involved in any peace-making process?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Clearly it is important that the peace-making process should produce an outcome acceptable to the Afghan people.

Libya

16. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further consideration is to be given by the European Economic Community Council to relations with Libya, in the light of the United States military attack on Libya.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The EC member states have already put in place a wide range of measures designed to combat Libyan-inspired terrorism, and have made plain their determination to resist it. That has also been the subject of close consultation with the United States, most recently at the Tokyo summit, where agreement was reached on a continuing programme of effective collective action.

Mr. Bidwell: Is it not clear that the Foreign Secretary is the odd man out in the EEC regarding the United States' bombing attack on Libya? Has he learnt lessons from that, and will he give us an assurance that there will be no repeat performance?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is far from clear that I occupy the position of odd man out. Indeed, the extent to which we could secure widespread agreement throughout the Community in support of the action programme we have suggested is remarkable.

House of Commons Crest (Circulars)

3.32 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is an important and somewhat urgent matter, and I am sure that the whole House, particularly in view of the urgency, will value your opinion and advice.

In the notes, "House of Commons Stationery and Post Paid Envelopes", paragraphs 4 and 5, which deal with circulars, state that such circulars, with

> "Crowned Portcullis or the Royal Arms, whether or not associated with the words 'House of Commons' . . . must not be used . . . in . . . supporting the return of any person to public office."

I understand that there have been reports from west Derbyshire that a large number of circulars have been circulated with the name of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on them, postulating and supporting the candidature of a certain gentleman for this House. It seems to me that that does not comply with those particular notes.

Unaccountably, no Liberal Members are present. It may well be that one could be found, and could disagree with my point and tell us that this is not the case. Were it to be the case, in view of the imminence of the by-election tomorrow, it would be a service to the House and, particularly, to the Liberal party if you could let us know, Mr. Speaker, whether that is a proper practice. If it is not a proper practice, I am sure that that party will do all in its power to withdraw the circulars.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman correctly read from the guidance to Members about how the crowned portcullis should and should not be used. He mentioned "reports" in west Derbyshire. If he will let me have the evidence, I shall look into the matter.

Prohibition of Plastic Bullets

3.34 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I beg to move,

> That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit the use of plastic bullets in the United Kingdom.

On Easter Monday in Portadown, Northern Ireland, Keith White was struck on the head by a plastic bullet fired by a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. His death a fortnight later brought to 16 the total number of people killed by plastic or rubber bullets used by the security forces in Northern Ireland. Hundreds more have suffered serious injury. A Minister from the Northern Ireland Office told me on the Floor of the House last Thursday that, since the Government started collating official statistics on these injuries, since 17 March 1981, 326 people have suffered serious injuries. There had been many more before that. The casualties include people who have been blinded, people who have been paralysed and people who have suffered brain damage.

Most disturbing of all, perhaps, is the fact that most of the victims have been children or young people, many of them completely innocent of riotous behaviour; for example, Francis Rowntree, aged 11, who died in April 1972; Stephen Geddis, aged 10, who died in August 1975; Brian Stewart, aged 10, who died in October 1976; Paul Whitters, aged 15, who died in April 1981; Julie Livingstone, aged 14, who died in May 1981; Carol Ann Kelly, aged 12, who died in the same month; and Stephen McConomy, aged 11, who died in April 1982.

Ministers, senior Army officers and senior police officers euphemistically refer to plastic bullets as "baton rounds", but this euphemism does not detract from their lethal nature. Indeed, no one should be surprised at their lethal nature. I have one here which I can show to the House. It is about 4 in. long and 1·5 in. in diameter and weighs over 4 oz. In weight and hardness, it has been likened to a cricket ball, but, of course, its cylindrical shape makes it more lethal on impact. We must also remember that the muzzle velocity is over 160 mph—more than twice as fast as the fastest of fast bowlers. The impact energy of a plastic bullet is 210 ft/lb at 5 yd and over 110 ft/lb at a distance of 50 yd.

Accurate research done by the United States army in the 1970s — research, by the way, which was done by maiming and killing poor dumb animals—indicated that impact energy of over 120 ft/lb invariably resulted in either death or severe critical injury. So the evidence that these weapons are lethal has existed for some time.

The intended range of the plastic bullet is 35 to 70 yd, but it has been known for them to be fired at point-blank range. For example, of the death of Mrs. Mora McCabe in July 1981 reliable witnesses said that Mrs. McCabe was struck by a plastic bullet that had been fired from a range of only 2 yd.

It is obvious that, if this situation is allowed to continue in Northern Ireland, it is only a matter of time until it spreads to the rest of the United Kingdom. Plastic bullets of this kind have already been issued to 13 British police forces, the members of which presumably have been or are being trained to use them.

I admit that there are different views about the best way of controlling riots or the best way of solving the complex problems underlying riots. Until recently, in Northern Ireland, it was probably true that attitudes towards the use

of plastic bullets depended very much on people's political or religious views, perhaps because most, if not all, of the victims came from families of Republican tradition. But the recent tragic death of Keith White, who came from a Unionist family, has brought condemnation of the use of plastic bullets from many people in the Unionist community too.

Whatever political or religious views people have, and whatever their views on the best solution to the Northern Ireland problem and on the best way to control riots, wherever and whenever they occur, surely we can all agree that the use of lethal weapons by the security forces makes things worse rather than better. It is undeniable that plastic bullets kill and maim innocent people. How many more children and young people will have to die before the House abolishes such a barbaric practice for ever from the whole of Great Britain and Northern Ireland? I ask the House to support my Bill.

3.41 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman seek to oppose?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Yes, Sir.

No police officer has any desire to be armed. In fact, the most distasteful duty of the police is the duty on occasion of taking arms and using them. However, the police are entitled to look to their police authorities and ultimately to the House to provide them with all necessary means of protecting themselves and the public from the attacks of violent men. It is in that sense that I shall argue against leave being given for the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) to introduce the Bill.

Fifteen years ago there was no need for the police to have access to baton rounds, but two dangerous developments have changed the environment in which the police today must confront violent men. The first development is the increased use of guns by criminals. The police predicted this when the House abolished the capital sentence, but whether that be the reason or not, the fact is that today armed criminals regularly take out and use firearms.

The second development is that too many men of violence who threaten the peace, whether at demonstrations, pickets or riots, nowadays throw petrol bombs which subject the police to terrible casualties, inflicted not at close quarters but at long range, at a distance of scores of yards. One result of this use of petrol bombs is that the police tactic of facing down mobs by body contact, by means of the thin blue line, has had to be reconsidered.

Last year 15,000 police officers were injured. That figure has been provided by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. In these circumstances, it is asking too much to require the police to stand there like sitting ducks while wild men throw petrol bombs at them.

It is against this background that the Association of Chief Police Officers has been examining the pros and cons of baton rounds. The association had before it, as the hon. Gentleman fairly said, the experience of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. What the RUC has discovered is that baton rounds, selectively used, can and do make riot control easier and safer. They also make it much less lethal to the police and to the rioters alike. The baton round, in fact, can and does save lives. It has done so in Northern Ireland.

The technical advantages of the baton round can be stated simply. First, unlike horses, gas or water cannon, the baton round is selective and discriminate. Instead of dousing large numbers of people with gas or water, the baton round can be used with precision against a specific individual who is hurling the petrol bombs or—as has happened—firing a gun at the police. Secondly, the baton round causes less damage than the regular firearm. There can be occasions when a dangerous criminal is cornered and it might be better to tackle him with a baton round that stuns or incapacitates than to use a rifle or a ruger that kills.

The third advantage of the baton round is that it can and does create space between the police line and the mob. That makes it impossible for the stones and the petrol bombs to carry as far as the police line and so cause vastly more casualties for the police.

The rules of engagement for the RUC, and certainly for the police on this side of the water, in respect of baton rounds, are precise. Let me remind the House of the rules for the Metropolitan police.

First, no baton round or discharger may be issued without the specific personal consent of a senior officer. Secondly, only trained marksmen may be authorised to draw baton pistols. And those officers must first have completed the full training for firearms officers, and refreshers, and they must also have completed a further course in the use of baton rounds. More importantly, no order to fire a baton round may be given in the Metropolitan police until the Commissioner — Sir Kenneth Newman personally — has given his direct consent. So far, no such order has been given. I hope that it will never be.

The House, however, is confronted with the decision whether today to give consent to the introduction of a Bill that could settle the matter for ever. If we consented to the Bill, it would mean that we had decided the issue, not on the basis of mature consideration of the evidence, not on the basis of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's advice, which I understand is now in preparation in the Home Office, not even on the basis of any study of this complex matter by any Committee of the House. Instead, we are invited, without even seeking, let alone listening to, the views of the police service, to settle the matter on the basis of emotion and of distaste for allowing the police access to the improved technology that they need to do their job.

I shall be interested to discover how the Opposition Front Bench vote. As one who wholeheartedly welcomes the recent Shadow Cabinet conversion to the need to condemn and contain mob violence wherever it happens, and who welcomes their desire to get rid of the anti-police militants that still disfigure the fringes of the Labour party, I hope that on this occasion they will not vote to deny the police the tools that they may need for the job.

If the motion were to be carried it would mean simply that we were saying, perhaps for all time, that the police should not have access to what could become a necessary tool for fighting terrorism as well as maintaining public order.

Voting for the motion, in the eyes of the police and, I believe, the public, would indeed be to deny the forces of law and order not a desirable, not a welcome, not even a sought-after weapon, but a means which could prove

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

necessary to defeat the forces of violence and, in the process, to save the lives and limbs of many innocent people, including policemen.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 85, Noes 184.

Division No. 170] **[3.50 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dubs, Alfred
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ewing, Harry
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hume, John
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Meacher, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Winnick and
Mr. Tony Banks.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Maginnis, Ken
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Penhaligon, David
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Renton, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Eldon Griffiths and
Mr. Jerry Hayes.

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

(Clauses 2, 15, 26 and 80)

Considered in Committee [Progress 6 May]

[MR. ERNEST ARMSTRONG *in the Chair*]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Order of the Committee [6th May] be amended and that Clause No. 80 be considered before Clause No. 2.—*[Mr. Moore.]*

4 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton South): With your permission, Mr. Armstrong, I should like to press the Financial Secretary to explain the change in business. As the Committee will recall, yesterday we had before us a procedural motion which outlined the order in which the clauses would be taken on the Floor of the House. Some of us, especially those who had tabled a motion to reduce the petrol price by 2p, which was to have been considered first this afternoon, were surprised at the motion to change the order of business. It would be helpful to the Committee if the right hon. Gentleman explained why this rather unusual and rapid change of business has been proposed.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Moore): For the convenience of the Committee, I shall explain the reason. I shall not go into the substance of the point. The proposed amendment may not lead to a reduction in the price of petrol. It may lead to an increase in vehicle excise duty. I thought that it would be for the convenience of the official Opposition if we took the clauses in a different order. That matter was considered through the usual channels. We have plenty of time, I gather, to discuss both issues. That was the sole reason for the change.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: With your permission Mr. Armstrong, I do not think that that is a very satisfactory explanation. As the Financial Secretary and the Committee will know, the price of petrol considerably affects rural areas, not least areas such as west Derbyshire and Ryedale. I always hesitate to think badly of Ministers, or of the usual channels, which do not incorporate these Benches, but, like other hon. Members, I shall be interested to hear the attitude of the Labour party to the change of business. Last year on the Finance Bill, the Labour party opposed changes in the price of petrol and the increase in petrol duty. I had assumend that Labour Members would want to seek the full glare of publicity for the alliance motion by taking it early in the debate, so that voters in tomorrow's elections and all the people in rural areas could note that the alliance and Labour Members opposed the increase in petrol tax and—

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Member must not debate his proposed amendment on petrol. He must stick to the business of the Committee.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Of course, Mr. Armstrong, but I think that you will agree that it is unusual for the business to be changed in this way. Although the inheritance tax —it is proposed to be the first business that we consider —is important to some, it is not important to the large majority of people in the same way as petrol duty, which the Government have increased substantially. For that reason, my hon. Friends and I were anxious to have an extensive debate on the increase in petrol taxes and an opportunity to reduce the price of petrol, especially for people in rural areas.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Am I not right in thinking, from the way in which the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) is advancing the argument, that the alliance's policy is that vehicle excise duty could be phased out to a nominal level——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. If the hon. Member goes down that road, he will clearly be out of order.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I should have been happy to respond to that point, but I shall bear in mind your ruling, Mr. Armstrong.

This is an important matter, not only to those in rural areas but to all car owners and to businesses which will have to pay more than the duty because of the Government's increases in petrol tax. The Committee deserves a better explanation of the reasons why the Labour party and the Conservative party got together through the usual channels to stop the debate on the alliance motion from taking place in the early part of the evening, and to shuttle it off into the late hours when it would not receive the public attention that it deserved.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): It may help the Committee if I responded——

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. I trust that you will allow us to proceed, because this is clearly a blatant example of cheap electioneering by those——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Davis: It may help the Committee — *[Interruption.]* I thought that the alliance was anxious to get on with the debate. The Labour party is certainly anxious to debate the increase in petrol tax and the abolition of capital transfer tax on gifts.

I make it clear that there was no question of the Labour party and the Conservative party getting together. *[Interruption.]* I do not usually divulge what happens through the usual channels, but on this occasion I shall. It was a matter not of the Conservative party and the Labour party getting together but of the Government responding to a perfectly proper request by the Opposition about the order in which — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) claimed that he would like to understand the reasons. If he restrains himself a little, I shall give him all the reasons.

The Labour party made a request to the Government. We appreciate the Government's courtesy and their willingness to accommodate us. When the hon. Member for Stockton, South has more experience of our proceedings in Standing Committees on Finance Bills——

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I sat on many when the hon. Gentleman was not a Member.

Mr. Davis: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will study the debate more closely and attend more frequently.

[Mr. Davis]

My experience of Standing Committees on Finance Bills is that representatives of the alliance have been more noticeable by their absence than by their presence. I shall not go any further. I was going to explain why I asked the Government to change the order of business. I realise that the reason may be strange to the alliance, but my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) will deal with the capital transfer tax provisions and, as a gentleman, I wanted the lady to speak first.

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): Like the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), I have tabled an amendment to clause 2, but, unlike the hon. Gentleman and his alliance colleagues, I feel that my amendment is so important that I am prepared to stay, no matter how late the debate goes. Alliance Members merely want to dash off home.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I should like to support the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). Last week, during Scottish Question Time, we had exchanges with Scottish Office Ministers about the price of petrol. Because I represent a highlands and islands constituency, the matter is obviously of considerable importance to me. I was therefore extremely pleased that my alliance colleagues took the opportunity this afternoon to table an amendment on petrol prices and so enable us to have a debate during which I could express some of the genuine concerns in that part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Terry Davis: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that we shall debate clause 2 when the alliance allows us to proceed with the business? We shall deal with capital transfer tax, and then petrol tax. The alliance seems to be concerned about the petrol tax, and I am delighted to note that, because last year when we debated the petrol tax I did not notice alliance Members in either Division Lobby. They did not vote for the Government, or against them. It seems that this year they have decided that this is the most important political issue of the moment. It is certainly extremely important. It was important to the Labour party last year, as it is this year. It seems that it is important to the alliance only this year. I can only conclude that there is something different about this year. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that tomorrow there will be by-elections and there were none at this time last year.

Mr. Kennedy: I feel that the hon. Gentleman's memory is somewhat at fault. If he looks at the Division lists of a year ago, he will find that the alliance firmly took the view that we were willing to support indexation. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will check on that, and if my memory is wrong I shall retract what I said, with apologies. However, that is my firm recollection.

I know that Ministers appreciate that this is an important issue for rural areas, and no more so than for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. That is why it struck me that the opportunity for a debate at this time of the day, when considerable public attention would be focused on it, was worth while. I find it somewhat disappointing that those who are only too willing to call for debates at certain times of the day in order to focus public attention on them —quite rightly on major issues, whatever they may be —are willing to turn that argument on its head when it suits them to ensure that this issue is not debated now. I echo the disappointment expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South.

Dr. Hampson: There is much indignation about this matter. Will the hon. Gentleman say whether he and his colleagues and members of the Liberal party will vote on this issue? Does it matter so much? Is it the timing that matters, or are they so serious that they will vote on this issue?

Mr. Kennedy: The hon. Gentleman should wait and see. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) should look at my Division record.

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): Will the hon. Gentleman explain to me, a mere Ulster Unionist Member excluded from the main stream of British politics, why Conservative Members seem to want to avoid this issue?

Mr. Kennedy: I am not quite sure what the issue is to which the hon. Gentleman is referring. If I assume, as I am sure the Chair would want me to, that he is referring to the issue that we are debating, I share his sense of curiosity. I am sure that his constituents, like mine, will share a sense of disappointment when it is known locally that this important matter, which deserves public debate and has been raised consistently by alliance Members and by others from both sides of the House——

Mr. John David Taylor: And Ulster Unionists.

Mr. Kennedy: —representing all shades of political opinion, is not to be debated at this time. Like my hon. Friends the Members for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) and for Stockton, South, I should like to express my considerable regret that the usual channels have taken this short-sighted and damaging decision.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman, who represents a party which has consistently voted with the Labour party to raise rates, to introduce a populist tax-cutting measure on the eve of a by-election without explaining how the alliance will pay for its high-spending policies?

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I am inherently far less suspicious of my hon. Friends. I have no doubt that Conservative Members are rather disappointed that we will not have an opportunity to discuss petrol tax first. My complaint is not that the change has taken place. It is conceivable that the reasons and arguments put forward for the change through the official channels are such that if one were familiar with them one would accept them. My complaint is that, although somebody might have been inconvenienced by the original prescribed order of business, that is what was announced, and that is what we all react to and try to deal with.

Changes have been made, and I might approve of them if I knew the reasons. The fact is that alliance Members are excluded from discussions on proposed changes and therefore we cannot make a value judgment on the reasons for the changes. It may be that the reasons are overwhelming and that we would be more than willing to go along with them, but we were excluded from the discussions. Having been a member of the House for a while, although I would regard my level of suspicion as very low, I cannot help but wonder whether putting the

petrol debate off has something to do with polling day tomorrow. I could not say that with confidence, but one wonders whether behind the scenes the request was subject to other considerations. That is the point that we are making.

If there is to be an official change in business—I accept that without them the House could not operate—more than just the official Opposition should be involved in those channels. In an odd way it does the Government no good, because it looks as though they are operating a Lab-Con pact—which many of us suspect they operate, to their mutual benefit — and to limit the alliance's opportunity to argue its case. That is my moderate case compared with the more strident views expressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) and for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy). I believe that the way in which the business has been changed is unsatisfactory.

4.15 pm

Mr. William Powell: I know that the House is keen to come to a decision on this matter as quickly as possible, and the arguments have been canvassed. However, there can be no doubt that in the context of this year's budget the decisions which the Government have made on the abolition of capital transfer tax and its replacement by inheritance tax are of fundamental importance.

The House listened with respect, as it always does, to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) telling us why the official Opposition wish to deal with this issue as a matter of priority. The hon. Gentleman's reasons are cogent enough for the Committee to follow and to support the motion which my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary has proposed.

The Liberal party and the alliance are always making great play of the fact that they support small businesses. The future of small businesses, especially in Ryedale and West Derbyshire, to which the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) referred, are of fundamental importance. I do not have the slightest doubt that all those in those constituencies who can see that their businesses are threatened by the continuation of capital transfer tax will be conscious of the fact that the alliance parties are postponing the decision while the rest of the Committee, including the official Opposition, wish to get on with it.

Mr. Moore: I am sure that we wish to proceed to the real business of the day. I have some sympathy with the comments of the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon). I understand his sense of being excluded, and his concern. However, I remember the awkwardness of the poor alliance parties last night. Between the Second Reading of the Bill and last night they decided not to vote, having voted on one key issue—income tax.

They obviously want to move on with the business as rapidly as possible, because they might change their mind between now and when the issue is raised in the next hour or two.

Having said that, I am looking forward with enormous pleasure, especially remembering the Public Accounts Committee and the contributions of the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), let alone the Liberal party's policy document of 22 April on the environment and vehicle excise duty, to the debate on the motorist, because the Government have an outstanding record on that issue.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Order of the Committee [6th May] be amended and that Clause No. 80 be considered before Clause No. 2.

Clause 80

LIFETIME TRANSFERS POTENTIALLY EXEMPT ETC.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I am glad that we are debating clause 80 first because, as has already been said in the earlier exchanges, this is a fundamental change in our tax system. That will be the burden of my argument.

Clause 80 removes tax from lifetime gifts and leaves only what is called the inheritance tax, which applies to bequests and lifetime gifts into discretionary trusts. This change was greeted immediately it was announced in the Budget by the press and the accountancy profession as a return to the former estate duty tax. That was a voluntary tax, which was once described as a tax paid only by the mean, the ignorant, the unsophisticated, the patriotic or the peculiarly unfortunate. I doubt whether the Government can expect much revenue from that source in future.

It was interesting to see that some of the press comment roundly condemned those changes. In an article in *The Guardian* on 1 April 1986, Victor Keegan said:

> "One budget day estimate . . . reckoned that if the Duke of Westminster's estate was—probably conservatively—estimated at £2 billion then Mr. Lawson, at the stroke of a pen, has made him wealthier by at least £600 million.
>
> Obviously that won't happen immediately, but it is nevertheless real money, resources that could be used over time to build schools, houses and all the other things that are desperately needed."

That is all part of the Government's policy, and the article describes the Government's main achievement as

> "the most extensive redistribution of wealth from poorer to richer people . . . in living memory."

Clause 80 is part of that pattern. That is why, unlike the Social Democratic party and the Liberals, we cannot regard it as an issue that concerns only a few. It is a fundamental change. It is an important step in the process on which the Government embarked in 1979, of redistributing wealth from the poorer to the richer.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I am interested in what the hon. Lady has said, but it seems to me to be a question not so much of redistribution as of how the burden of taxation is felt. Does the hon. Lady think it fair that we should move towards a situation in which institutions and companies are in the same position as individuals, with regard to capital taxation?

Dr. McDonald: We must have a fairer distribution of the burden of taxation between individuals' earned income and the unearned income that may derive from investments through an institution or the individual's personal ownership of wealth. The Government have altered that distribution of the burden of taxation in favour of the better off, without any proper justification. That is what my argument is about.

The Chancellor suggested that CTT was an anti-enterprise tax. Few other countries view it in that way. Twenty countries out of the membership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development have both an inheritance tax and some sort of gift tax to supplement it. America has had a gift tax to supplement its estate duty since 1932, and nobody would describe America as running an anti-enterprise tax system.

[Dr. McDonald]

The Government were utterly determined finally to kill off tax on lifetime gifts. That tax has been eroded throughout the lifetime of the Government, and now it is finally to be polished off altogether.

I talked earlier about the need to distribute better the burden of taxation between individuals' earned income and income deriving from the capital that people own. It is worth reminding ourselves how wealthy some people in our community are. The most wealthy 1 per cent.—that is, about 420,000 adults — own among them £150 billion, according to the 1983 estimate. I refer only to marketable wealth. That is enormous wealth, which is concentrated in very few hands.

Let us look at the next most wealthy group—4 per cent. of adults, about 1·7 million people, also own among them about £150 billion. That is an enormous concentration of wealth. It will not be redistributed in any way by removing the tax on lifetime gifts and leaving only an inheritance tax. That will do nothing to achieve that. It will do nothing for the economy as a whole. It has no economic or social justification whatsoever.

Tax on lifetime transfers has been reduced so much during the lifetime of the Tory Government, first in 1979 and then from 1983 onwards, that it already constitutes less than 1 per cent. of total Inland Revenue receipts. That is a very small proportion, yet the Government think that it is too much to place on the richest members of our community, so even it is to be abolished altogether, leaving only the inheritance tax, which has been described as a voluntary tax. No wonder the Chancellor's proposals are well described as a step back into the future.

Let us look at what has happened with the remaining inheritance tax. Accountants and other tax advisers have been quick to point out that it can be avoided altogether. One has to take a chance on it. One gives away one's assets, and one has to live another seven years after that gift has been made. The only strength in the Chancellor's proposals is that one has to give away one's assets altogether. One does not retain any interest in or control over them. At least that is something, although I doubt whether it will be enough to prevent the tax planning that is already going on.

The inheritance tax will fall on what some people describe as the middling rich—those with estates of up to £250,000, who probably do not wish to take the risk of parting with their assets during their own lifetime. The tax will not fall on the super-rich, because they will be able to make disposals of their assets during their own lifetime. They can afford to do so. Therefore, the tax is in no way directed towards the richest members of our community, who are more able to bear a greater burden of taxation. This is a tax which, at best, will fall on the not-so-rich members of our community, but even there the tax avoidance business is already under way.

I should like to refer to some of the suggestions that have been canvassed in the financial press. I shall take a selection of examples and then seek the Minister's assurances. My first example is the activities of the insurance industry, which the Government thought they had killed off in clause 80. It is at it again. According to the *Financial Times* of 26 April, Equitable Life, Britain's oldest mutual life assurance company, has issued four types of temporary protection contracts to enable people to avoid the inheritance tax. That is one proposal that is already under way.

In another article in the *Financial Times* of Saturday 22 March, Stuart Chapell of the accountancy firm Neville Russell suggests a further possibility:

"You could provide for the trust to be wound up"—— one's children could be the beneficiaries of that trust— "and the trust property handed back to you if some contingent event occurred."

That means an event altering one's financial status.

Another suggestion is the possibility of setting up a particular sort of trust. *Accountancy Age* of 25 March 1986 says that the Finance Bill

"has not moved to attack interest-free loans, the heart of the old inheritance trusts."

In the article, an expert is quoted as saying:

"The trusts could return on the basis of a specific settlor exclusion. And anyone who had a flexible trust set up before the Budget can still make large loans repayable over 15 or 20 years."

That is another example of a possible form of evasion. There are a number of examples of work under way by accountancy firms and insurance companies to see how inheritance tax can be avoided, not necessarily by the super-rich — they will not necessarily be hit by inheritance tax—but by the middling rich.

4.30 pm

I want an assurance from the Minister that schedule 18 to the Bill will be carefully examined before its Committee stage. I hope that the Government will look at the work that is already under way by the tax planning industry and that they will ensure that amendments are tabled for consideration in Committee, to take effect during this financial year, to plug any loopholes. In Committee on the Finance Bill, it is usual to examine proposals to plug gaps in the legislation one year, or perhaps two years, later. I want the Minister's assurance that the proposals that were canvassed in the financial press barely a month after the Budget, to enable the better-off to avoid tax, wherever possible, will be looked at carefully.

Another implication of clause 80 relates to accumulation and maintenance trusts. Gifts into such trusts are completely free of tax. The Minister knows that such trusts benefit those under 25 years of age. In particular, they are designed to pay school fees. Peter Leach of Stoy Hayward was reported in *The Times* of 19 March 1986 as saying:

"The abolition of the tax introduces a whole new area of estate planning for family companies, and possibilities for the creation of trusts to assist in the payment of school fees."

That report appeared the day after the Budget.

Work has gone ahead straight away to find out how clause 80 will advantage the better-off. Money can be paid free of tax by grandparents or parents to cover school fees. Those who are already privileged will pay for the education of their children at private schools free of tax. Wealthy people who set up trusts to pay for the private education of their children forgo tax at the expense of other taxpayers who cannot afford to send ther children to private or public schools. They have to send their children to state schools, a system of education that the Government persistently have undermined since 1979.

Although in previous years grandparents could pay only £3,000 a year into a trust fund—if they paid more it had to be deducated from the £67,000 inheritance tax exemption — the sum is not now to be limited. Any amount can be paid into trusts of this kind to provide privileged education for the children of the better-off, at

the expense of other taxpayers. Expenditure on state education has fallen from 5·5 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1978-79 to a planned 4·6 per cent. of GDP in 1986-87. In other words, support money has been removed from the state system. A very important consequence of this clause is that the children of the better-off will be sent to private schools, at the taxpayers' expense. The clause is designed to reduce the burden of tax on the rich and the very rich in our society. It increases the burden of taxation on those with average and below average incomes, a process that has continued since 1979. As a proportion of income, if one adds together tax and national insurance insurance, their burden has increased.

As *The Guardian* rightly pointed out, the Government have jigged and rejigged the tax system so that the poor pay proportionately more and the rich pay proportionately less. At the same time, money is being taken from the public services upon which the great mass of the people depend: the National Health Service, education, and other services. In the most cynical and blatant way, the Government favour the better-off. That is why this is a fundamental issue for discussion. The Liberal and Social Democratic alliance are completely wrong to dismiss it. When a Labour Government are returned to power they will ensure a fairer distribution of the burden between those whose income is derived from capital and those who work day by day for every single penny that they earn. We reject entirely this clause and the whole philosophy behind it.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I take this opportunity to declare my views about clause 80. They are directly contrary to those of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald). The burden of capital taxation has constituted a major disincentive to those starting, creating and developing businesses. It has also been a disincentive to people to save for their families. I have had direct experience of working with people who are in both of these positions, and I can tell the hon. Lady that that is the case. Any reduction in this tax is therefore to be welcomed.

Dr. McDonald: The hon. Gentleman ought to come clean about the levels of capital transfer tax that were imposed upon small businesses. The maximum rate of tax, at death, was 60 per cent. Business assets relief of 50 per cent. was available. The true rate of tax was 30 per cent. which could be paid over 10 years, with no additional interest being charged. The true maximum liability was only 3 per cent. a year for 10 years. I do not believe that that can be regarded as a disincentive to small businesses. However, the Government's economic policies have served as a disincentive to small businesses. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that that is why, throughout this Government's period of office, there has been a record number of liquidations and insolvencies.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Lady has a good grasp of the rates of taxation but she has a much less firm grasp of the real world. Business men want to be able to contemplate the sale of part of their businesses and to be in a position to create wealth before they retire, but the rates of capital taxation have been a considerable disincentive to them. Therefore, the hon. Lady has a considerable amount of homework to do.

The purpose of my intervention is to point out an anomaly in clause 80, which deals with lifetime transfers. The unstarred amendment that stands in my name would have put right that anomaly, although I understand why you were unable to select it for debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In one or two respects — the hon. Lady mentioned a few of them — clause 80 restores the position on lifetime gifts to what it used to be before the days of capital transfer tax, but it goes further than that.

As the clause stands, an outright gift attracts no inheritance tax, provided that the donor survives for seven years. If, therefore, I wanted to give you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a section of my business or estate, if I had one, and I survived for seven years, there would be no capital taxation. On the other hand, if I had a life interest in the estate, or in a valuable property, and I gave it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the remainder man who was entitled to pick up the end of the trust when my life interest disappeared—an enchanting and encouraging prospect—there would be an immediate charge to tax under the clause. That is clearly anomalous. The two gifts are very much the same. There is a slight technical difference because one is a gift of settled property. I can see no reason in equity why these two gifts should be treated differently.

I understand that the Treasury's policy is to try to treat trusts differently from assets held absolutely—property that is not settled—but some trusts have been singled out for special treatment. The hon. Member for Thurrock referred to accumulation and maintenance trusts, but did not refer to the welcome special treatment of trusts for the disabled. I point that out to show my hon. Friend the Minister that there are ways in which he is going rather further than restoring the position to what it was before CTT. I hope that he will seriously consider putting these two gifts on the same level so that the position is not as anomalous as it is under clause 80.

Mr. Penhaligon: I used an opportunity made available during one of our previous debates on the Bill to show some fundamental opposition on principle to the idea that, henceforth, it is possible for someone to leave as much as £10 million to a son, daughter or whoever and not incur one farthing of tax. I stand by my judgment—I still believe that to be wrong. The decision is unjustified, and the Government are reflecting their political roots too much by trying to argue that it can be justified.

It is said by some much wiser than I that the Duke of Westminster is worth £2 billion. I do not question that —it may be plus or minus the odd £1 million, but let us take it as £2 billion and see how the Bill will affect such a sum. It would be possible for him to leave his son or daughter half that sum—that is £1 billion—tax-free. He would have to fulfil other clauses requiring his complete separation from the money that he has given away and the business of which it was part, which would still leave him with £1 billion.

I suspect that most hon. Members could live out their lives very satisfactorily with assets of £1 billion. A few of us, more accustomed to modest living standards than others, could probably reduce that figure by half or even 75 per cent. and still survive quite comfortably. In the case of the ultra-rich, substantial wealth can be transferred to another person, and the person giving the money will still have control of the remaining part of his wealth, which is capable of providing a living standard beyond the comprehension of most hon. Members, and certainly all our constituents.

Besides that, there is a whole industry based on trying to avoid taxation on the £1 billion that is left. I have no

[Mr. Penhaligon]

wish to go into details, but an industry has been built up around what is called estate management, which means avoiding tax. That is not outside the law.

That is background, and we come now to the details of the case. The best argument against the vicious imposition of capital transfer tax or death duties, call it whatever, is the effect that it can have on a moderate or small business —a farm, a shop or a small factory. There is no doubt that the imposition of substantial CTT on a business worth, let us say, a third of a million pounds can have a substantial effect on that enterprise.

My concern regarding this clause is partly that it exempts the ultra-rich from making a real transfer of wealth to the well-being of the state. It is also that I believe that the category for which I suspect the Government will claim that the measure will have the most benefit will, in an odd and peculiar way, not have such benefit in the final analysis.

My experience of small businesses has made me only too well aware that many a small business man looks prosperous and has a farm or a shop or whatever. However, the person involved has not one farthing of spare cash. If he wants to buy a car he has to borrow the money against the basis of wealth in his enterprise. However, the idea that many small businesses in our constituencies have enormous volumes of cash kicking around does not stand a great deal of examination.

4.45 pm

In particular, the farming community is notorious for not having cash. There are those who take the view that the farming community thinks that it is the duty of other small businesses in the community to provide them with cash flow to run their business. They are not poor— they are wealthy by the standards of many people—but they do not have easily liquefiable assets at their disposal. In future, although the owner will have the freedom to give the business to his son or daughter without incurring taxation, he can do so only if he can prove to the satisfaction of the inspector of taxes that not only did he give the business, but he separated all his interests from it.

I am aware that there are many cases where benefit would accrue if only the old man would retire, but in many small, self-employed businesses, the idea of retirement many days before the owner is taken away because the good Lord has decided to intervene, runs so counter to established practice that it seems unlikely that any part of the Finance Bill could incorporate it. The owner of the farm, shop or business could find that he could give to his son and incur no tax, but he has no right to any income from that enterprise. The lunatic position could conceivably arise whereby somebody of 70 or 80 with a family business in which there is no cash available could find himself drawing supplementary benefit if he gave away the business.

The sector in which to reduce CTT is the small business sector. There is sense in encouraging transfers while the new generation is of an age to use its enthusiasm, skill and entrepreneurial sense to the best advantage. There is a chance that the Bill, as compared to the law before it and taken as a whole, could discourage transfers at the time of retiring in small businesses. If that is so, the Government are making a deep and fundamental error.

The Bill could, on an interpretation of the advice given to me, exempt the ultra-wealthy — people who have billions of pounds at their disposal — from tax on wealth, while imposing it on the relatively small business man, farm owner or shop owner, who has not significantly suffered under previous tax ratings. That is lunatic.

The Liberal party and the alliance believe that one can justify, and we do so, a system of taxing the wealthy on death and on the transfer of gifts during a lifetime. We would justify that not by arguing that we should transfer wealth from the individual to the state, but on the basis of distributing wealth among the people. We would like a tax system that encouraged the person making the decision to give money to spread that wealth rather than to continue its concentration in the hands of one person. We call that idea an accessions tax.

If someone is fortunate enough to be able to give £1 million to an individual, we would so organise matters that if the person donating the money decided to give four different people £250,000 each rather than giving one person £1 million, the donating of the money to four separate people would incur less tax collectively than would the giving of £1 million in a lump sum. In that way we believe that wealth distribution would be encouraged among the people rather than a distribution of wealth from the people to the state.

Furthermore, if one of the individuals who was fortunate enough to receive £250,000 from that £1 million was to receive another £250,000 from someone else, that individual would pay more tax on the second £250,000 than he would have paid on the first.

That is a far more rational and sensible way of dealing with the problem. The statistics that are available which ignore pension rights—and I am always dubious about statistics that ignore pension rights — suggest that a quarter of the wealth in Britain lies in the hands of 1 per cent. of the people. That is an unacceptable concentration of wealth, and over the long term the state should use its powers to encourage the fortunate 1 per cent. to spread their wealth. The changes in the clause do not accomplish that. The Bill will encourage something that we have not seen for a long time, the concentration of real wealth in the hands of the ultra and super-rich. That may be Government policy, but it is not alliance policy.

We support private enterprise and an entrepreneurial system. However, we believe that one of the problems of capitalism which the state has a role to control, is that capitalism, if it is left unbridled, can lead to unacceptable concentrations of wealth and power. Although we believe that a capitalist system is more likely on the whole to give the British people the goods, services and articles that they desire, we believe that if it is left unbridled, it could lead to an unacceptable concentration of wealth.

The Minister has ample opportunity, on the schedule today, to reply to my comments in detail. I hope that the Minister will reflect on the different effects that the changes will have between the ultra-rich whom the Government seem to have exempted from effective taxation, and the small business within the definition that I gave of a business approaching two thirds of a million pounds. It is not inconceivable that in the reality of family life, as I understand, know and have experienced it, the tax load may be increased. I cannot believe that the Government want that, but some people with a greater

knowledge and understanding of the details of tax affairs than I, reached the conclusion that that will be the main effect of the Bill.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I had prepared some remarks which I had hoped to offer to the Committee at this point, but the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) has covered those points in his usual inimitable and convincing style. I hope that the Minister will indeed respond to the hon. Gentleman's request to deal with his idea. The idea put forward by the hon. Gentleman is not new. I had the pleasure of discussing it with my hon. Friend the Minister of State's father some 25 years ago, and I believe that he was very much attracted by it then.

In the debate on clause 15, I said:

"the Government's objectives should be to give every individual the maximum possible incentive to create wealth and to simplify the tax system as much as possible."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1986; Vol. 97, c. 121.]

I might have added that the Government should seek as far as possible to remove the elements of uncertainty from the tax system. As a sequel to these recommendations, I suggest that the Government should abolish higher rates of tax altogether. I envisaged that income tax and national insurance contributions could be consolidated at 40 per cent., with appropriate changes to the system of allowances.

If such reforms were adopted, they would merely consolidate the present system and give greater scope to individuals to accumulate personal fortunes. By consolidating the existing system, I mean the marginal rate of tax, which is the real rate of tax for the majority of people.

If the Government have the courage, as I recommend, to abolish the higher rate of tax altogether, the question will arise how to prevent very large resources being inherited and put to less than optimum use in idle or imcompetent hands. I am not convinced that the proposals in part V should be the Government's final word on the taxation of lifetime transfers and bequests.

The Chancellor's intention is laudable and well meant, but the proposals do not remove the element of uncertainty that is inherent in the present system. They lengthen the period of insecurity and make the incalculable element in taxation so much the worse. That is not a good factor for business, although I accept that the Chancellor means to be helpful.

Insecurity and unpredicability are inevitable inhibiting factors for business. They cannot be avoided altogether, but it is unfortunate if the tax system makes such factors worse. I believe that it is an unnecessary blunder to lengthen the time span of anxiety to seven years. I do not welcome the taxation of private capital, because I believe in a property-owning democracy. The Government are not helping the creation of wealth by withdrawing capital from individuals who know how to make good use of it.

Would it be possible to devise a tax on capital transfers and bequests which brought in the same yield—if that is necessary—but on the lines recommended by the hon. Member for Truro? That would not make for unnecessary uncertainty in long-term business and investment planning. At the same time, such a tax could serve to further the Government's object of increasing the number of private owners of wealth and property.

I suggest that the taxation of gifts and bequests should be based on the amount received by the recipient of the benefit above an exempt limit over his life span rather than on the size of the property dispersed by the donor. If a man was prepared to disperse his property sufficiently widely, he could escape the taxation of his estate altogether; but if he preferred to concentrate his estate on one or two people only, or to follow the practice of primogeniture, he would at least be able to calculate the liability for tax with reasonable certainty at the time that he took his decision.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will rehearse the arguments for and against the change in inheritance and bequest taxes and tell us whether the Government are prepared to consider favourably further reform of the type suggested in the clause and perhaps in a forthcoming Budget.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The simple proposition before us today is whether the House wishes to reduce the burden of taxation on those who transfer wealth from one generation to the next. I wish to support any measure that increases the liability to pay tax during the course of that transaction.

It may not have been clear at all exactly what the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) was saying. He said that, even after the Budget is translated into legislation, people who effect gifts or bequests will still be paying too much tax. I believe that such people are paying too little tax.

I should like to move the debate into the real world. Those who examine our proceedings today will wonder how it is possible that the House of Commons is setting out to approve the principle of reducing taxes paid by the very wealthy in society when its Members must know of the conditions that exist outside.

5 pm

One month ago, following the Budget, an elderly constituent of mine came to my surgery to talk to me about poverty. During that discussion, I explained to him that I was well aware of what was going on in my constituency, that I circulated among people of all classes, with all kinds of problems, unemployed and employed, to discuss matters of mutual importance.

My constituent asked me to visit a particular estate in my constituency in the north of England. I visited a number of houses on that estate and saw something that I have seen before, but never in such a concentrated form, which can only be described as indescribable poverty. I went into houses—we must consider these matters in this debate today—where people simply cannot afford to live. They cannot afford to decorate their homes, to clothe their children, to eat meat once a day or to heat their homes; they cannot find work, they cannot afford to travel or go on holiday and they rarely visit their relatives. They live in what can only be described in 1986 as the most unreasonable of circumstances. They simply cannot understand why we in this House carry motions such as this, which will be carried today, to reduce taxes for the better-off in society. They do not understand how people who have millions should suddenly find, after a Division in the House, that they are the beneficiaries of hundreds of thousands of pounds by way of tax cuts.

It is monstrous for the Government to return year after year with these niggly little measures to reduce taxes in this way. This is not the first time that this has happened. Two of the three Labour spokesmen on the Front Bench today have repeatedly gone through proceedings on Finance Bills over the past few years arguing against reductions in capital transfer tax.

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

The debate in the House has become boring, but the debate outside the House is even more desperate. I say to the Government: please stop it. The people of this country believe that it is wrong, and it is not only Labour people who believe that what is happening is wrong. Many Conservatives outside also have a social conscience. When I knock on their doors and discuss such matters with them they equally object. They know that what is happening is wrong. They often feel that they have a social duty to pay the price of alleviating the suffering by which many are being subjugated. They do not understand the Conservatism which turns its back on those people. Nor do they understand the arguments about the need to reduce capital transfer tax as some part of the development of an incentive society and, in particular, the development of small businesses, because it is not true.

The problem with this House is that far too few people in it have been in business and understand what motivates business men. Their knowledge is academic. It is too often a lawyer's understanding of the brief. It is too often an inherited money man's understanding of how the wealth mechanisms in our society work. They do not work in that way. The only incentive that the business man needs to operate is a good market and a good product. He wants people to buy what he has. The fact that he will pay 3 per cent. per annum for 10 years in the settlement of an inheritance or capital transfer tax bill in 20 or 30 years' time is of no consequence at all. He is not interested.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Rubbish.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why does not the hon. Gentleman get to his feet and tell us his experience of running a business and how it is that he believes that people suddenly lose the incentive to go out and create wealth? I can tell him that the entrepreneurs in my constituency are not interested in this debate. All they want is good regional assistance. All they want is——

Mr. Wrigglesworth: A good accountant.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman is right. All they want is a good accountant. All they want is a decent market and a good product. With a combination of all those things, they will create all the wealth necessary to secure employment within my constituency and to secure their own futures. The hon. Gentleman does not understand that simple proposition.

For years, the Tories have tried somehow to justify reductions in capital transfer tax on the back of the argument that they are needed as part of the incentive society. Indeed, inheritance acts as a disincentive to initiative. Many people who can rely on inherited wealth do not make an effort. Often the most effective business people in our society have acquired nothing by way of birthright; they started off with nothing in the world and went out to make their fortunes. They had all the incentives before them. Inheritance destroys that very opportunity. It makes people lazy.

Looking around our society, too often I can identify people who, having not inherited wealth, may have made a far greater contribution, whether in the professions or elsewhere in society.

In reducing capital transfer tax and, indeed, switching to a new tax, the clause proposes something which the British public do not want. Parliament should reject it.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I have considerable sympathy with the views of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). It has never ceased to amaze me—although I suppose that I should not be surprised—that the Conservative party spends so much time and effort on the Floor of the House and in Committee upstairs in Finance Bill after Finance Bill on issues of this sort.

Contrary to what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) said, I spent many hours sitting upstairs when he was not a Member of the House on Finance Bills listening to hour after hour, day after day, of debate on capital gains tax and its finer points, on inheritance tax and capital transfer tax — on all the capital taxes. That affects a minute proportion of the British population and, indeed, a minute proportion of Conservative voters. The overwhelming majority of Conservative voters in my constituency will not be affected substantially by any of these changes. They affect a tiny minority of people.

But the foundation upon which the Chancellor has built his case for these changes, which was referred to earlier by one of his hon. Friends, is that they have to be made to relieve the burden on small businesses. It is argued that the tax regime has crippled small businesses, but I understand that that cannot be so. The Chancellor said in his Budget statement that capital transfer tax on lifetime gifts has been

"a thorn in the side of those owning and running family businesses, and as such has had a damaging effect on risk taking and enterprise within a particularly important sector of the economy."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 175.]

I agree with the hon. Member for Workington—such tax is irrelevant to most entrepreneurs. I do not believe that they calculate capital transfer tax or inheritance tax when establishing businesses. Other matters motivate them.

The existing tax liability on business assets is not a serious burden if proper steps are taken to minimise it. As the hon. Member for Workington said, most such people have very good accountants. Indeed, there is a whole business that ensures that small businesses take the proper steps. If business property which qualifies for 50 per cent. business asset relief is given away more than three years before death, the rate of tax chargeable cannot exceed 15 per cent., and that will generally be payable by annual instalments over 10 years.

Furthermore, business assets account for only a small proportion of capital transfer tax take. In 1983-84, CTT took some £601 million, but business relief was estimated to cost some £20 million. As most business property gets relief at 50 per cent., and some get relief at 30 per cent., only about £30 million is payable in CTT. In other words, 95 per cent. of the CTT take comes from non-business property. The tax is therefore not the great inhibitor of businesses, as Conservative Members claim. Even if exempting business property could be justified, exempting gifts of non-business property could not.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the take of tax has nothing to do with whether someone is inhibited from developing a business because of a fear of it? The two are separate.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: The Chancellor built his case on the foundation of the £600 million tax take inhibiting businesses, and I have just explained that only 5 per cent. of the take comes from business property. What, then, is

the reason for the exemption? The Government want to hand substantial amounts of money back to wealthy people. There should be no doubt about that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I bet that the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) is a beneficiary. He shakes his pocket in shame.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Many other Conservative Members will be doing the same.

5.15 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. I shall not sit here and listen to that thoroughly unpleasant and unparliamentary slur. I ask you to afford me the protection to which I believe I am entitled and to ask the hon. Member to withdraw.

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) ought to withdraw those remarks if he made them.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If the hon. Gentleman is not a beneficiary, I withdraw.

Mr. Baker: I am certainly not a beneficiary, but even if I was, the hon. Gentleman ought to withdraw, and I ask him to get up and have the decency to do so.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: As I have said, if the hon. Gentleman is not a beneficiary, I withdraw.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Only a tiny minority of the population will benefit substantially from the tax changes. Year after year, their interests are represented on the Conservative Benches.

There is an overwhelming case for taxing lifetime gifts and we shall certainly do that if we are given an opportunity.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Peter Brooke): This has been an admirable and wide-ranging debate. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) gave us a trailer of what she will argue in Committee when we debate clauses 79 to 86 and schedule 18. She led off with observations about the redistribution of wealth. The effect of these measures on the redistribution of wealth is negligible. Indeed, capital transfer tax, which the Labour party introduced in its last Administration as a once-per-generation tax, could never have been an effective engine of wealth distribution. At its height, it never yielded more than about 0·1 per cent. of personal marketable wealth per annum, and changes in asset values such as houses and share prices are far more important than CTT has been to the distribution of wealth.

I shall not repeat the notes on clauses but, if I did, I should draw the House's attention to the fact that the trust regime, which has prevailed under CTT, remains essentially in place. That is somewhat at variance with what the hon. Lady said. Transfers that involve an interest in possession as well as discretionary trusts remain firmly part of the regime.

The hon. Lady dwelt on temporary protection contracts and insurance, and asked me various questions. The chronology of clauses 79 to 86 and schedule 18 means that they will be considered later in the Committee stage, so there will be plenty of time to pay attention to any aspects of them which require it, and I give the hon. Lady an assurance that we shall consider the representations that are made to us.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister tell us the cumulative value of CTT concessions, including indexation, which the Government have made since 1979? Can we have the figures now? It is important that the House knows how much money has been given away before it makes a decision.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury dealt with that on Second Reading.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We are here to make a decision. There is about to be a Division. That being so, we are entitled to know how much money the Government have given away to a very small group of people since 1979. Furthermore, we ought to know how much has been given away in each year.

Mr. Brooke: If I need to modify my answer before I finish my speech, I shall certainly do so.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. The Minister is telling the House, in a most unparliamentay way, that he intends to guess and then allow a civil servant to correct him.

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman knows that is not a point of order for me. The Minister is responsible for his own speech.

Mr. Brooke: The figure to which my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary alluded in the earlier part of the debate was £1·7 billion, which embraced capital gains tax, capital transfer tax and the investment income surcharge.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sorry. We are asking about capital transfer tax.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order.

Mr. Brooke: If I may proceed——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No. Let us have the figures from the Minister.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman must contain himself. If he wishes to intervene, he must stand and do it properly.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. We are debating capital transfer tax. We are entitled to hear from the Minister at the Dispatch Box today the specific figures. I have asked for a series of figures; they need not be part of an amalgam of other figures.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The Minister is responsible for his speech. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is all part of the debate. If he wishes to contribute, he must do so properly.

Mr. Brooke: An answer given to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) on 28 April explained that the yield of tax in respect of transfers in 1985-86 was estimated to be £70 million less that if the 1979-80 regime had been indexed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. The Minister has come to the House to answer a debate on capital transfer tax, and he has not come armed with the figures. He knows that the Government have given——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. As I have explained to the hon. Gentleman, that is not a matter for

[The First Deputy Chairman]

me. The Minister is responsible for his speech and for the information that he gives to the House. Hon. Members can then debate any figures that he gives or does not give.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: He has not done his homework.

Dr. McDonald: In the reply to which the Minister referred, he will note that specific changes in capital transfer tax between 1979 and now are listed and were estimated as costing £70 million, but the answer did not refer to indexation. Adding indexation makes a difference to the figure. Perhaps the Minister would add indexation in his reply.

Mr. Brooke: Quoting the answer to the hon. Lady, I said that the figure was lower than if the 1979-80 regime had been indexed. Of course, we shall return to the matter if clarification is required.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We are about to divide the House. This is unreasonable. The Minister has not done his homework.

Mr. Brooke: I assure the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that, apart from anything else, I must respond to his speech, so it will be some time before we divide.

The hon. Member for Thurrock mentioned accumulation and maintenance trusts. Of course, it is true that, if someone makes transfers into accumulation and maintenance trusts and dies within seven years, he will be subject to the same regime. When the hon. Member for Workington interrupted me, I was dwelling on the temporary protection contracts. I must tell the hon. Lady — this applies to all citizens in the land — that it is perfectly legitimate to take out a term insurance policy to cover the possibility of inheritance tax becoming payable if the donor of a gift dies within seven years. However, if the policy is subject to a reservation for the donor, it will be subject to the new rules on gifts with reservations.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Let us get on with the figures.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman made a speech and was heard in silence. He must listen to what the Minister has to say. The Minister has hardly got going yet.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. Every Minister who comes before the House knows at least one figure for the expenditure involved. This Minister, during this Finance Bill on this highly important matter, has come to the House without the figures that we need. On that basis, the sitting should be suspended——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is a matter for debate. If he wishes to make his points, he is entitled to make them, but the Minister's speech is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Armstrong.

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman cannot raise a point of order further to a point of order that was not a point of order.

Mr. Clay: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. I seek your guidance. As I understand it, if any hon. Member were to mislead the House, it would be in order for the Chair or any other hon. Member immediately afterwards or on the following day to ask that hon. Member to correct the record. That has happened many times and, inexperienced though I am, I understand that it is proper parliamentary procedure.

In the exchange between my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and the Minister, my hon. Friend objected to the fact that the Minister said, "I will give some figures, but if they are wrong, I will put them right later." That is a circumvention of the tradition in the House that Ministers take responsibility, as we all do, for the facts that we put on the record. It is a serious break with tradition for Ministers to say, "I will give some figures, but if they are wrong, I will correct the record later."

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman should know that the Minister's speech is a matter for the Minister. If there is doubt about figures or facts that are given, that is a matter for debate——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Let us have the Chancellor, then.

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman will have to face the consequences if he is unwilling to behave properly. All that I wanted to say was that this is a matter for legitimate debate. It is certainly not a matter of order for the Chair.

Mr. Brooke *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Brooke: I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's speech in due course.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) made a proposition in his speech, which was trailered in an amendment that we were unable to debate today. The purpose of the change to inheritance tax is to remove obstacles to unfettered lifetime giving while protecting the death charge. That requires the preservation as far as possible of the existing trust regime. The removal of the tax charge when an interest in possession is released to the remainder man would undermine the death charge. Property could be channelled to the intended beneficiary by way of a trust giving an interest in possession to a surviving spouse. The transfer to the trust for the spouse would be tax-free. It is right to impose a charge if the spouse subsequently surrenders the interest to the remainder man. Schedule 18 is relevant to my hon. Friend's proposition. We shall return to the matter in Committee.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) concluded his speech with references to what has become known as the donee tax. In the context of the earlier part of his speech, I should say that the regime relating to gifts with reservations is essentially a stronger regime under this legislation than the regime that prevailed under capital transfer tax. The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) acknowledged in the Budget debate —to be fair, the hon. Member for Truro did so, too— that there were genuinely difficult problems with the previous tax. It was not perfect and was capable of

improvement. The hon. Gentleman's speech related primarily to the concept of the donee tax, which the Liberal party has espoused.

Mr. Penhaligon: Is the Minister assenting to my basic proposition that, for relatively small transfers of wealth, the clauses added together could be stronger than the previous legislation? If he accepts that, does he agree that the affect is much weaker for the ultra-wealthy transferring their wealth?

5.30 pm

Mr. Brooke: I would be the first to acknowledge that greater freedom is conferred by the legislation, and I shall return to that subject.

The hon. Member for Truro raised the subject of the donee tax, for which we also had a trailer on Second Reading of the Finance Bill. The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) was interrupted by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) who asked:

"Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the wider distribution of shares would be greatly encouraged if the Chancellor, instead of virtually abolishing capital transfer tax in this Bill, had remodelled it in such a way as to encourage wealthy people to make a multitude of relatively small gifts of shares to large numbers of people rather than passing on their inheritance to only one or two members of the family?"

The hon. Member for Stockton, South replied:

"Yes. I hope that we can pursue that point in Committee because it is something that we would like to see."—[*Official Report*, 29 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 843.]

That scenario raises the interesting question whether those two parties rehearse their interventions in advance, or operate on a basis of blind faith. That is a particularly interesting notion, in the light of the response of the hon. Member for Stockton, South.

The SDP, in its working paper on tax reform published in July 1985, resiled from the question of a donee tax. The SDP always has a flavour of the ancien regime about it, but the Marie Antoinette principle of having one's cake and distributing it widely seems to be carried to an excessive degree. I do not want to intrude in any way on the private communications between the two parties, but, given the SDP's position on a donee tax, I am not clear how the hon. Member for Stockton, South can intelligently represent the hon. Member for Truro.

That uncertainty about the principle of a donee tax echoes the Liberal party's difficulty last night in deciding whether to vote on the 1 per cent. deduction from income tax. We had perfectly good donee legislation under the legacy duty until a Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir William Harcourt, transferred the principle to a donor principle in 1894. This is another classic instance of the Liberal party having second thoughts about legislative principles.

In 1972 the Conservative Government issued a Green Paper on a possible change from estate duty to this sort of inheritance tax. The consultative process resulted in a clear view against such a change. The main reasons were that the tax would be extremely expensive to administer, there would be an extra burden on executors in dealing with more beneficiaries and calculating the different amounts of tax due, there would be much work in re-arranging wills written on an estate duty basis, there would be other transitional problems, and the system would create more difficulties in dealing with trusts. The theoretical benefits of such legislation which were advanced by the hon. Member for Truro are not justified by the major legislative and administrative changes that would be involved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) supported the hon. Member for Truro on the subject of donee taxation, dwelt on the issue of uncertainty, and wished that we could do more to avoid it. Uncertainty cannot be avoided altogether, as my hon. Friend conceded. Life is uncertain; I have no doubt that that phrase has been uttered in six different languages with much more elegance than I can manage. It is difficult for us to remove the uncertainty of life in planning the taxes of this land.

The hon. Member for Workington made an eloquent speech to which the House listened closely. As I have cause to know, the hon. Gentleman has run a small business, although he did not allude to it today. Therefore, his remarks are apposite to the debate, with its preoccupation with this area. I join the hon. Member in having had a similar experience in that I also know what is involved in running and building a business. But the difference between the hon. Gentleman and his side of the House and our side of the House is that we believe that we need to release the resources of growth to provide solutions to the genuine problems to which he was referring. The difference between the Labour party and the Conservative party—I speak as somebody engaged in business during the Labour Administration between 1974 and 1979—is that the Labour Government overloaded the system and prevented the private sector from generating the growth to provide the resources. During the past five years, this Government have been singularly successful in ensuring the release of those resources.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If that is the case, will the Minister tell me how a concession of £600 million to one man in London will help my unemployed workers in Workington?

Mr. Brooke: Both the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Stockton South have intervened on the same point. The hon. Gentleman is making assumptions about the pattern of taxation, and deriving conclusions from it, when it is much more logical to draw conclusions about this taxation from the distorted effects that occur because taxation directs people into areas where they might not otherwise go.

The hon. Gentleman's speech would have been worthy of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, and the preface to his book on Samuel Smiles, with a ringing tribute to the entrepreneur. I do not disagree in any way with the hon. Gentleman's observations about entrepreneurs, but some businesses go wrong, perhaps also because entrepreneurs stay in control of a business too long, which is sometimes because the tax structure prevents them from handing over the responsibility for the business earlier.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South raised a legitimate point about the effects of the taxes on the business community as a whole. If he looks at the pattern of businesses in the United Kingdom which, for example, employ more than 1,000 people, he will see that twice the proportion of our employees in the national work force work in companies employing more than 1,000 people compared with our competitors who have the smallest proportion. One must ask how far that concentration of

[Mr. Brooke]

employees in larger companies, with all its implications, particularly bearing in mind that it is not mirrored by our competitors, has been impelled and driven by our tax regime.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: No one will disagree with the Minister's disappointment at the figures which he has just quoted, but whether the cause can be ascribed to the taxation regime is a different matter. Will the Minister confirm what I said earlier, which was that only 5 per cent. of the capital transfer tax take comes from business assets?

Mr. Brooke: One cannot draw conclusions from the tax which has been paid. The problem is the tax which has not been paid as a result of people distorting their normal pattern of behaviour because the tax exists.

To return to the question asked by the hon. Member for Thurrock in support of the hon. Member for Workington, the rates and thresholds have not been fully indexed in line with the retail price index since 1979-80. The yield in 1985-86 is higher. Obviously, if hon. Members wish to pursue other aspects of the statistics, we can do so in future.

I know that there are hon. Members who wish to speak about hydrocarbons before the night is much older, so let me come to a conclusion.

The last time that I had the chance of speaking in Committee on the Finance Bill was in 1978; as a kind of mirror image, it was, I think, the last occasion on which the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) was unable to speak in Committee on the Finance Bill. I recall arguing in Committee against the legislation of the last Labour Government because it distorted the behaviour of business men and caused them to act, purely for tax reasons, in a way in which they would not otherwise have acted. The legislation which we are introducing and which is encompassed by clause 80 confers on business men and on every other member of our society the freedom to order their affairs in terms of their own best interests, rather than causing them to take decisions simply because of fiscal imperatives.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 206, Noes 114.

Division No. 171] **[5.40 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dunn, Robert
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Francis Maude.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ewing, Harry
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Meacher, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Hamilton and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause 80 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

HYDROCARBON OIL

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 19, leave out '"£0·1938" and "£0·1639"' and insert '"£0·1896" and "£0·1601"'.

The amendment seeks to reduce the increase in duty on light oil and heavy oil to the amount that would be justified by indexation. This would reduce the increase in duty to 5·7 per cent., compared with the 8 per cent. imposed by the Chancellor in the Budget. It would increase the rate of duty to 18.96p and 16·01p, compared with 19·38p and 16·39p, and would reduce the price of petrol by about 2p per gallon.

In the Budget the Chancellor continued the process, which has gone on under the Government, of over-indexing taxes on petrol. Under this Government the total tax take, including VAT, has risen from 38p to £1·10. At current prices the rise has been from 74p to £1·10—roughly half as much again in real terms. Part of the increase in tax take is due to higher petrol prices and the imposition of VAT on petrol, but a substantial proportion is accounted for by an increase in duty alone, from £4·8 billion at today's prices in 1978-79 to £7·3 billion in 1986-87.

Most important, duty as a proportion of the price has risen from just under half to 67 per cent., or just over two thirds. That is a substantial increase in the duty that customers pay at the pumps for every gallon of petrol. By contrast, the Government have kept the level of vehicle excise duty constant in real terms by increasing it from £50 to £100. They have closed the gap between duty on petrol and duty on derv, quite rightly, so that the latter is lower than the duty on petrol.

The Chancellor's strategy is not clear. We do not know whether he is moving towards the phasing out of vehicle excise duty. It would be helpful to the House if the Minister could explain exactly what the Government's intention is on vehicle excise duty and petroleum duty. If the Chancellor's intention is not to phase out vehicle excise duty, there seems to be a much weaker case for using petrol duty simply to recoup revenue lost because of falling oil prices. That benefit should be passed on entirely to industry and to the consumer.

The Chancellor was right to resist the siren voices which argued that he should finance the substantial tax handouts for those in work by over-indexing the duty on petrol and other goods. However, motorists, particularly in rural areas, who suffered last year from increases in the price of petrol to over £2 per gallon, should get the full benefit of falling oil prices. Of course, not only motorists in rural and urban areas but industry, too, should benefit, because increases in duty bear most heavily on it.

Industry in countries which are not as rich in energy as we are pays much less for petrol and derv than does industry in this country. The Confederation of British Industry has made it clear that it would be of considerable assistance if the price burden of petrol and derv on industry could be reduced.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Does the hon. Gentleman believe that higher prices encourage people to be more efficient in their use of energy?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Yes, but we have had that with a vengeance recently. It has happened because of increases in oil prices generally, but, as I pointed out earlier, the Government have increased the duty take on petrol from some 50 per cent. to over two thirds. I do not think that one can easily justify that. That is why we tabled the amendment. It is right to increase the duty by the amount of price indexation, as the Government have done on some occasions, but on many other occasions they have

[Mr. Wrigglesworth]

increased the duty by more than the rate of inflation. As a result, the proportion of duty has gone up as I have described.

At a time when the Government are reducing revenue support for public transport, estimated in the 1985-86 public spending White Paper to be 10·6 per cent. below the previous year's level in real terms, together with the deregulation of local bus services outside London, they are reducing the options for those in rural communities even further. Many people in rural areas are being forced into almost total dependence on car transport. While petrol tax should not be held down artificially as an instrument of transport policy, if it is raised excessively it will result in an increasing distortion of choice between modes of transport. The amendment would provide modest help for all motorists, and crucially for industry, by reducing transport costs and helping companies to stay competitive.

If the Government's philosophy is to let the economy reap the full benefit of lower costs from falling oil prices, they should not have increased duty by the amounts set out in the Bill. The Chancellor may claim that freezing vehicle excise duty means that the overall burden for industry remains unchanged, but the opportunity has been missed to pass on a greater direct benefit to car and lorry users by helping to stimulate economic activity directly by keeping prices lower.

I hope that we will get a clear statement from the Minister on the Government's view of the balance between vehicle excise duty and petrol tax. We can then make a clear judgment on the direction in which the Government are going. I hope that the pleas of industry, and particularly of motorists in rural areas, will not fall on deaf ears and that we shall have the support of Conservative Members for the proposition that I have put forward.

6 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I support the amendment. It is important that the Government try to justify what has happened. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced his intention to increase petrol duty, he said that he hoped that the increase would be absorbed by the oil companies and that they would pass on to the consumer the fall in the value of petrol on the world market. There has been a slight adjustment downwards in the price of petrol, but certainly not in response to the Chancellor's request. My impression is that the oil companies, on receiving advice from the Chancellor that they should sacrifice some of their profits in exchange for increased tax revenue for the Government, hardened their attitude and deliberately kept up petrol prices at the pumps to show that they were not at the beck and call of any Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Whether that is true or not, the differential in petrol prices in the United Kingdom has remained. The companies have made no attempt to take account of the Chancellor's advice to try to pass on to certain areas of the United Kingdom some of the advantages which should have gone to the consumer following the drop in oil prices.

I am advised that the cost of petrol per gallon in Stornoway is £1·89. That is far in excess of prices prevailing in other parts of the United Kingdom. The difference is as much as 30p a gallon. Outside Stornoway the price might be even higher, and a differential of 20p per gallon is common in different parts of the mainland.

On a recent election visit to Grangemouth, I spoke to a refinery worker who complained that the price of petrol in Grangemouth was very high and that none of the benefits of the lower oil prices was being passed on in the locality.

There can be no argument about the cost of transport. BP's petrol pumps are just several hundred yards from the refinery, but they have the full central belt mark-up. BP is obviously benefiting at the expense of local residents and its work force.

Scottish Television conducted an inquiry into the price of four-star petrol on 31 March. Petrol prices have now come down in response to lower oil prices, but Scottish Television said that the average price per gallon of four star petrol in Scotland was £1.79·6 whereas in England it was £1.73·7 — a difference of 5·9p per gallon. The lowest price of petrol in Scotland was £1.72 per gallon and the highest, on the mainland near Wick, was £1.95, so my right hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) can buy cheaper petrol than the unfortunate citizens of Wick.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Unlike mainland constituencies, my constituency has no railway track, so all goods have to be moved by transport requiring petrol.

Mr. Wilson: I accept that. I was about to make a further contrast which might be beneficial to Lewis but horrendous for the Isle of Tiree, because a gallon of petrol there costs £2.09—the highest price in Great Britain.

That is a consequence of the way that the Government charge petrol duty as a flat rate and of discounting, or lack of discounting, by the oil companies. In various places a discount or subsidy applies to the price of petrol available to retailers with independent forecourts. If there are no independent forecourts, or when there are only a few, there is a quasi-monopoly and the price of petrol is correspondingly higher. The price of petrol is sometimes kept up artificially, as if there were a cartel in operation, but the Government do nothing about it. They have not asked the Director General of Fair Trading or the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to inquire into retail costs, distribution and charging for petrol in different areas. The Government have not sought through fiscal means to vary the petrol duty rate so that remote areas benefit.

The throughput of petrol in remote areas is usually small. The petrol station proprietor probably does not have a large turnover, so he acquires for himself high profits. In some circumstances he might have to pay transport costs if his petrol is sold in island areas.

Many arguments and complaints have come from Scotland about what has happened. Scotland is the fifth largest oil producer in the world, but it does not seem to derive benefit from that. The market, although volatile in places, does not seem to have reacted to our benefit. I have taken the matter up with the Director General of Fair Trading. I am not convinced that either at his or at Government level there is sufficient appreciation of the hardship caused in some areas by high petrol prices.

The areas with highest prices rely on cars or vans which use petrol rather than derv to transport goods. That means that overall costs are higher in relation to the cost of living. There is a direct relationship between petrol costs and the cost of living in remote areas.

The Government should do something about petrol prices. Each year the Chancellor puts up petrol prices, if

only to keep in line with inflation, and then he takes his rake-off for the Treasury's coffers instead of trying to work out a formula which bears some relation to equity and fairness. I hope that the Minister will take on board the representations that have been made. Throughout the length and breadth of Scotland people feel frustrated, because Scotland always seems to be the tail-end Charlie. It is time that the Government considered the interests of the people of Scotland for a change.

Mr. Kennedy: I support the amendment. The price of petrol is fundamental to my part of the country—the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. I am not stating the obvious when I say that having a motor vehicle is no luxury there. A vehicle is a human and social necessity so the price of petrol, and of fuel generally, has a major effect on the way of life, the infrastructure and the economy. For reasons of inescapable geography, the people of the Highlands and Islands will always suffer from being distanced from the available markets and the added costs that that puts on indigenous goods sent elsewhere and on materials brought in, so petrol and fuel prices are of fundamental importance.

I echo the broad sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson). I draw the attention of the Minister and the Committee to the 1984 and 1985 reports "Rural Scotland: Price Survey" by MacKay, consultants of Inverness. Both reports make the point that, in addition to the difficulties caused by high fuel costs, there is the related problem of the availability of petrol. There is no evidence that the position is improving. Both reports state:

"an increasing problem in Rural Scotland is in relation to the availability of petrol. The number of garages and filling stations is falling steadily and some recent closures have left large areas without a source of supply."

This is a problem which that firm has mentioned in the past, but which it says continues to worsen in the absence of any action by the relevant public authorities.

I appreciate that the problem is complex. The amendment seeks to reduce the increase proposed in the Budget to a more acceptable level, and if accepted by the Government would be very much welcomed. Those speaking in support of the amendment hope that it will commend itself to the Treasury.

The same company carries out occasional surveys into the level of incomes in the Highlands and Islands. I understand that discussions are taking place between officials of the Department of Trade and Industry and that company about the last survey, which showed lower average earnings, coupled with a higher cost of living in the Highlands and Islands. The economics of that is clear—it is extremely tight for both families and businesses to survive and succeed. Anything that eases the burden would be welcome, and we believe that the amendment would do that.

I hope that the Government will take this small but significant step towards reducing the burden on business, enterprise and the individual domestic consumer in the north of Scotland and the Highlands and Islands, and which is to the detriment of that part of the economy. It could also be argued that such burdens thwart many aspects of the Government's economic policy.

I hope that the Government will respond positively to the amendment.

Mr. Penhaligon: I regard the amendment as modest. A case could be made for a more substantial reduction, but I want to promote policies which are possible rather than simply to vent anger.

I use the words "vent anger" because of the increase from 30p to 88·1p in the duty on a gallon of petrol since the Government took office in 1979. I do not know the precise rate of inflation since 1979, but it is certainly not of that scale. In addition, VAT is charged at 15 per cent., which is above the 1979 level.

I unashamedly stand before the Committee to plead the case for the remoter parts of Britain. It is interesting to note that hon. Members who have spoken for the amendment represent those remoter parts of Britain, and so are more than aware of the impact of fuel prices on the life, economy and development of our society.

6.15 pm

It is not so long since petrol was a great deal cheaper than it is today. During the early large increases in oil prices it was generally believed that the use of petrol would decline because of price hikes. I accept that one benefit of the increases has been the trend towards more economical cars, which is a desirable objective. However, as I suspected at the time, the use of petrol in the remoter areas has remained constant. Despite what is thought in the metropolitan areas, in remote parts a car is by no means a luxury. Those living 10 miles from the nearest town either go by car or stay at home, because there is little public transport. Those wanting to sell goods to the major metropolitan areas have to transport them. The distance from my front door to the House of Commons car park is about 300 miles. That might not be the most common of business routes, but it is a fair guide. It is a far greater distance than most people realise. The produce of farms, mines and industry must be carried over that distance.

I do not believe it to be any coincidence that the levels of unemployment in Britain are proportional to the distance from London. The right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) represents the remotest area in Britain, and his constituency suffers from very high unemployment levels—as, of course, does my area.

I wish to record my protest about the gradual increase in taxation on petrol in real terms. There is no justification for it. Such increases have a significant economic effect on areas such as mine. There is no justifiable case for endlessly looking to petrol to produce a larger and larger proportion of the nation's revenue.

On 8 April 1986 the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) asked the Chancellor to set out in tabular form for 1979-80, 1985-86 and 1986-87 to date the proportion of the cost of certain articles that was accounted for by tax. The answer revealed that in 1979-80, 48 per cent. of the price of a gallon of four-star petrol went to the state in taxation—almost half the cost. That is a fairly generous contribution by car users to the state's financial requirements. However, by 1985-86, the tax had risen to 60 per cent. I suspect that if the figures were worked out today the percentage would be even higher. There is no logical reason for taxation to rise by that amount.

The amendment is modest. It proposes only that the indexation of petrol tax this year should be in accordance with inflation, which is entirely reasonable. Recent Budgets have accepted that indexation can be justified. We are arguing for no more, although I assure the Minister that my constituents would like me to do so. We are not

[Mr. Penhaligon]

arguing for anything irrational, unreasonable or desperately Poujadist for the remoter parts of Britain. We are simply drawing the attention of the Committee to a major fact of economic life in rural parts.

A motor car is a part of life. It is accepted that at the age of 17 one learns to drive a car. In most families, learning to drive a motor car is not an option. It is not discussed as something that one might do at some future time. Families earning incredibly small incomes in areas such as mine succeed in running motor cars. It is a reflection of the ingenuity of local garages that they manage to get the motor cars going to pass the MOT test. The hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) has seen the condition of such vehicles. Sometimes, I think that our approach to MOT testers in remote areas is a little too flexible, though I know that the vehicles are kept going, that they pass the MOT test and that they are safe.

The tax will have a major impact on those who live in remote areas. Although the impact is of a personal and individual nature, it affects the economy. The total impost of tax on transport has increased substantially in recent years, and this has affected the ability of remote areas to trade and exchange ideas and goods with the more populous parts of Britain. I see no reason to welcome or accept the increase.

I recognise that the amendment is relatively modest. I remember when the Financial Secretary to the Treasury accepted an Opposition amendment of petrol tax. There was some excitement in the House at that time. I hope that tonight the Minister will likewise be impressed by the arguments, although I fear that the parliamentary numbers are not as impressive as they were then.

It is worth remembering that the petrol tax was reduced on the previous occasion because the Conservative party, which was in opposition, supported the initiatives of the Liberal and Nationalist parties. I pay due credit to those hon. Members who are present in the Chamber for their support on that occasion. Hon. Members agreed that the imposition of that tax was unfair and collectively we changed the mind of the then Labour Government.

I look forward to hearing the Minister explain what is significantly different about our present position compared with the position that faced us on the earlier, peculiar occasion. I hope the Minister recognises that he has made a mistake. I hope also that he welcomes the initiative of the hon. Member for Dorset, North, who tabled the amendment, and will accept it. One lives in hope. I have been a Member of Parliament for 12 years and, on the whole, hope has not been one of the most reasonable of objects. I reminisce about such enthusiasm. I look forward to the Minister accepting the amendment.

The ability of a remote area to trade, meet, and exchange ideas with some of the more metropolitan parts of the nation is greatly affected by the level of taxation on fuel. I have no doubt that such taxation is causing great damage to the economy — in my part of the world at least—as the costs prove to be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

Mr. Terry Davis: I welcome you to the Chair, Mr. Knox. I had hoped to catch your eye at a later stage in the debate on clause stand part, but the debate has been so wide-ranging that perhaps it will suit the convenience of the Committee and the Government if I explain the Labour party's view not only of the amendment but of the clause itself.

Last night I described clause 15 as the centrepiece of the Finance Bill, and I think it would be fair to describe clause 2 as epitomising the approach of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to taxation. It is an excellent example of what his own colleagues described as his "ingenuity".

In the Budget statement the Chancellor announced an increase of 8 per cent. in the tax on petrol and derv—7½p a gallon on petrol and 6½p a gallon on derv. The 8 per cent. increase compared with a 5·7 per cent. increase in the retail prices index. In effect, the Chancellor increased the tax on petrol by 2p more than it should have been increased on the basis of indexation, and he increased the tax on derv by a similar amount in excess of indexation. Last year the Labour party criticised an increase which was in line with indexation. We criticised that increase because it was made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer automatically and without thought, and we criticised it on two specific grounds.

First, the Labour party criticised an increase based on indexation as inflationary, at a time of falling inflation. That point is as valid today as it was a year ago. An increase in the price of petrol is inflationary. The Government would argue that the price of petrol has come down. The price of petrol has not come down by as much as it would have come down if the Government had not increased the tax.

The Labour party's second ground for criticising the Chancellor's approach to that indirect tax was that the Chancellor did not have any regard for people for whom a car is a necessity rather than a luxury. This year, in his Budget statement, the Chancellor said that the overall burden on the motorist would be "unchanged in real terms". The Chief Secretary to the Treasury repeated that statement in a later debate. I must disagree with the views of the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary. It is not correct to say that the overall burden on motorists will be unchanged. The overall burden on motorists will be unchanged, but there will be a change in the effect of the tax on the individual motorist because there are differences between motorists. The imposition of such a tax on petrol will have a selective impact. If the Government increase the tax on petrol and keep vehicle excise duty at the same level, some people win and others lose.

There are three groups of winners and losers. The first group who will gain comprises those with smaller rather than larger motor car engines. The losers are those with cars with big engines. I have some sympathy with that as a basis for an approach to taxation. By and large, the people who drive small cars have low incomes and people who drive cars with big engines have large incomes. I do not object to a tax which places a greater burden on those with high incomes and the greatest wealth.

The second group affected by the tax are those with cars with newer engines. They will pay slightly less than those with cars with older engines. Every motorist knows that the consumption of petrol is worse in a car with an old engine. People with low incomes tend to drive second-hand or even third-hand cars, with old engines. The increase in tax will therefore impose an unfair burden on those with low incomes who drive older cars.

The third group of winners and losers is made up of those who have low and high mileage. An increase in the tax on petrol, as distinct from an increase in vehicle excise

duty, puts a higher burden on those with higher mileage. I have some attraction to that approach, because it means that the tax — the contribution to the Government's revenue—is related to the use of the roads, the motoring system and the support services. It is expensive. It is a question not only of the cost of roads but of providing the police, ambulance and other support services. An increase in petrol tax means that more is paid by someone who uses a car a lot and less is paid by someone who uses a car a little.

However, serious problems exist in rural areas. The problems concern not only those who live, as the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) described them, in remote parts of the United Kingdom. It is expensive for everyone who lives some distance from where he works. It is a great mistake to think that all the people who live outside towns and cities work on farms — that they simply roll out of bed and end up down the lane at a local farm. Many people living in rural areas work in rural factories, and they have to drive many miles to work. A burden will be placed on those people.

The previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) described a tax on petrol as a selective tax which was

"deliberately biased against those living in rural areas"

and

"deliberately biased against those who had no option about the method by which they travel to work."—[*Official Report*, 9 May 1977; Vol. 931, c. 937.]

It is not only people in rural areas who may have no option about the method by which they travel to work. Because of the Government's policies on the bus industry, more and more people who live in urban and suburban areas will have no choice in the method by which they travel to work.

6.30 pm

The Government say that competition has forced the price of petrol down. On Second Reading the Chief Secretary to the Treasury based his defence of the Government's tax increase on that ground alone. Yes, competition has forced the price of petrol down, but it cannot force that price below the level of tax. Petrol is 2p a gallon higher than the indexed level because of the Budget, and the total increase is, of course, even greater. Petrol costs 7½p a gallon more than it would have cost without the Budget. If the Government expected the oil companies to absorb the increase or were concerned about the profits of oil companies because they had failed to reduce their prices in line with the price of oil, they could have tackled the problem differently. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition put it, the Government could have introduced a special tax on the excessive profits of oil companies—one that could be compared with the tax that the Government imposed a few years ago on the banks' excessive windfall profits. But the Government have turned their face against that alternative. They prefer to tax the motorist instead of the oil companies.

Mr. Penhaligon: Is it not true to say that the main reason why petrol prices took a while to come down was the imposition of the 90-day rule regarding fuel stocks?

Mr. Davis: There are many reasons why petrol prices fell more slowly, following the fall in oil prices, than they should have done. I suspect that an element of market forces was at work. In recent weeks, we have seen the effect of competition in forcing down the price of petrol; in some cases, I suspect, at the expense of the margins of the retailers who sell the petrol. However, I shall not enter into discussion on the economics of the oil industry, in which I once worked.

The point is that the Government's policies are imposing a tax on the motorist, not on the people who make profits from extracting, refining and distributing petrol. The result is that the tax as a proportion of a typical post-Budget price has increased from 48 per cent. in 1979-80 to 60 per cent. following this Budget. That answer was given a month ago in *Hansard*. I suspect that, following the subsequent fall in the price of a gallon of petrol, the percentage has increased; so an even larger percentage of the price of a gallon of petrol can be attributed to tax. Competition cannot force down the price of petrol as far as it would otherwise go if the Government increase the tax on a gallon of petrol.

Last year we argued—I repeat the argument tonight — that in such a situation the Government should undertake a wide-ranging and thorough review of the balance between vehicle excise duty and petrol tax. We are still waiting for that review. Our arguments were rejected last year. At that time, we opposed and voted against an increase in line with indexation. This year, we oppose even more and we shall vote against an increase in excess of indexation.

There is no holy writ on indexation. There is nothing in the finance legislation that says that the Government must increase the price of petrol in line with the increase in the retail prices index. That is a political decision. The alliance may wish to increase the price of petrol in line with inflation during the past 12 months. We do not think that that is or should be an automatic policy, and we reject that approach.

Equally, we reject the Government's approach in failing to outline any policy. The Government have no philosophy or logic in their approach to the tax on motoring and motorists. We are waiting for a wide-ranging study of the type recently made of personal tax allowances with particular reference to tax arrangements for married couples. Failing that, we do not agree with the approach of the Government or of the alliance. This tax, which this year is presented as a switch from vehicle excise duty to petrol tax—the Government have not increased vehicle excise duty on cars and light vans — is simply opportunist. The Chancellor saw an opportunity to increase the tax on petrol without people realising—or so he thought—that he had increased it because the price was falling at the time. We regard the Chancellor's decision as a trick, and we will vote against it.

At the appropriate time, we will therefore vote against the motion, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Moore: As you kindly said, Mr. Knox, it might be useful if, like the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), I look first at the amendment and then, because the debate goes wider than the amendment, go to the substance of the clause.

One cannot look at clause 2 in isolation. Essentially, what the Government have sought to do relates, in combination, to clauses 2 and 3. We have sought to revalorise overall duties for the motorist so that, as a result of the impact of the combination of VED and petrol duty, the motorist is no better or no worse off in real terms. I think that hon. Members have recognised that.

The Government's changes seek to alter in a modest way — I accept that it is modest — the essential

[Mr. Moore]

relationship in the burden which existed before between petrol duty and VED. The Government's changes do not change the total; they simply change the relationship. In total, VED decreases relative to its role in taxation, and petrol duty increases.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) legitimately asked me to make the Government's position clear. I should have thought that, to alter somewhat the balance in VED's favour, following a substantial decrease in petrol prices, would be seen as a perfectly reasonable position. As the hon. Member for Hodge Hill legitimately said, it is extremely difficult to be absolutely certain about the alliance's policies. However, I detected in the speech of the hon. Member for Stockton, South what was essentially suppport for the thrust of the Government's policy. The amendment relates specifically to petrol duty. I understand that, because we are dealing only with clause 2.

It would be helpful if the Committee could understand the bizarre nature of the alliance's amendment as seen in isolation. I try to spend my time, as do other Committee Members, reading the alliance's literature published outside the House as well as what its Members say in the House. *[Interruption.]* I do not know whether that will be in the *Official Report*. The charming references by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), which we enjoy, show that it might be a mistake for me to try to read the literature published outside the House by alliance Members, but that is what I do, because that is my duty. Occasionally the electorate thinks that certain statements might have some relevance to the alliance's aspirations to office.

I thought that the "policy"—I put a question mark over that word because it is difficult to establish what the policy is—of the official Liberal party on the relativity between VED and petrol tax was published on 22 April in the Liberal document "An Environment for the Future". It was clear and interesting. It essentially argued that VED should be reduced to a level to cover only the administration costs of registration.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Hodge Hill remembers that last October we discussed across the Floor the annual report of the Public Accounts Committee. We had the benefit of the statements of the current official economic spokesman for the alliance, the charming hon. Member for Truro. He made his policy clear. We assumed in our innocence that that was the policy of the Liberal party and the alliance. On 24 October, in the debate on the report, the hon. Gentleman argued for the retention of VED because he saw the problems of a 38p addition to the price of petrol. I am at a terrible loss.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helen's, South) *rose*——

Mr. Moore: I shall just conclude this point.

I had assumed that this amendment was in line with the alliance policy on vehicle excise duty, but presumably it is not. Presumably its policy has reverted to that set out by the hon. Member for Truro. If the alliance does not wish to add 38p to the price of a gallon of petrol, it would be helpful if there were a useful intervention at this point so that we can know precisely what it wishes to do. The Government's position is absolutely clear from the way in which the Chancellor maintained the burden on the motorist as it was in real terms. It was the relativities that he changed.

Mr. Penhaligon: I suspect that the Financial Secretary had this point drawn to his attention, rather than having read the document. If he would read the document he would notice that it says:

"This booklet is published for consultation and comment: criticisms and suggestions from within the Party and from outside will be welcome."

My party's environmental panel is not used to the Financial Secretary giving advice. However, he has given advice, and I appreciate that. I agree with what he said, and I hope that between us we can remove that proposal from that otherwise rather good document.

Mr. Moore: Charming as the hon. Member for Truro is, he cannot get away with the illusion of telling the outside world that this is simply a policy document in which we should have no interest when it comes to the real issue. I could repeat the question, and it might be interesting to get an answer, because the question relates to the view of the alliance parties—both the alliance's economic spokesmen are present—on the relativity of duty as between VED and petrol. What is it? We know the alliance's view on the supposedly vote-winning attempt to revalorise petrol duty. If an alliance Member would like to intervene, I should be delighted to give way.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Financial Secretary agree that the views of the alliance are not a question of a north-south policy, but of where the next by-election is, whether it is a rural or an urban seat? Its policies seem to vary according to where the next by-election is.

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman expressed that much better than I was trying to do.

The hon. Member for Hodge Hill went on to discuss the major part of the clause. I was disturbed by the way in which the Opposition essentially argued that the Chancellor had got it all wrong in the Budget. They seemed to suggest that there was no possibility of a free market existing after the Chancellor's budgetary decisions, and they essentially argued that prices will not go down. The arguments have changed somewhat suddenly in the past week or two as a consequence of prices actually going down. They have switched the argument vaguely in the past few weeks, and again tonight, as between the theoretically oligopolistic roles of the oil companies and the way in which we were told we were naive. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was told that by the leader of the Opposition and by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), and I remember participating in the radio programme "Any Questions" with the representative of the alliance, Polly Toynbee, and the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson), who represented the Opposition.

We have not acted in a naive way. As I said, the Government's position is absolutely clear. In the Finance Bill, in the face of declining oil prices, we have sought to protect the revenue. This is not an unimportant factor, because there is £140 million of theoretical loss attached to the alliance amendment. The gross revenues in terms of the revalorisation of VED and petrol duty are about £485 million. This is not an insignificant sum in budgetary judgments. We have sought to ensure that the burden for

the motorist is unchanged and the revenue protected. At best, if our arguments are satisfactory, the motorist may be slightly better off, rather than the reverse.

6.45 pm

Hon. Members have rightly drawn attention to the difficulties in different parts of the country. I should like to remind the Committee of the facts of what has actually happened. There has been some rather bizarre debate in the press and, dare I say it, in the House, about that. I shall look at what has happened nationally, internationally and regionally.

Nationally, we do not often look at the nature of the crude price content of a gallon at the pump. People have rightly discussed the varying pattern of tax as a percentage of a gallon over the past 16 or so years. Let me draw to the attention of the Committee what has happened nationally to crude prices since last October and November, because I think that this is germane. According to the best statistics and data that I can obtain from the Revenue and the Department of Energy, the average crude content of a £1.95 gallon in November 1985 varied between 35 and 40 per cent. There are many variables involved. Each company has different relationships with its refinery capacities, downstream activities and the nature of its business. However, that would have given a crude price content at 35 per cent. of 68p. We have seen roughly a halving in crude prices. All other things being equal — they never are, because margins change and companies' actions change but I do not want to bore the Committee with that — a halving of the crude price might have seen a reduction of 34p, half of the 68p crude content in November 1985. That would have brought the pump price—I accept that there are variations—to £1.61 now. That may not be acceptable to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) and parts of Scotland but it is not dissimilar from what we are seeing in many parts of the country today.

I shall now look at the relative comparisons internationally. We do not live in an isolated world. It is interesting to look at the falls in the average pump price of four-star petrol between 25 November 1985 and 21 April, excluding duty and tax. They are almost universally similar throughout the Community. The average is 30 per cent. For the United Kingdom it is 29 per cent. I could go through all the detailed statistics, but I do not want to bore the Committee. Essentially, the figures are all around 28 to 31 per cent., with one or two exceptions.

I should mention the relative price at the pump today in international terms. We are probably a little below average within the Community, at about £1.65. I can give the hon. Member for Truro the pump prices for France or Germany. For France it is £1.98, and for Germany it is £2.43.

Mr. Penhaligon *rose*——

Mr. Moore: I shall be moving later to the relative percentage of tax in the pump price if that is the point that the hon. Member for Truro is trying to make.

Mr. Penhaligon: I was hoping that the Minister would compare like with like. It is not relevant to compare ourselves with the rest of the European Community. The comparison should be made between ourselves and other countries which have an oil production surplus, such as the United States or Saudi Arabia and the other oil-producing nations. Those figures would be more relevant to the debate. If we were to use those figures the Minister's arguments would not stand up so well to examination.

Mr. Moore: I shall go into much greater length at some other time about the way in which some countries seek to charge a lower price relative to the market price and the tax price.

The regional point was raised by many hon. Members, and it is relevant to the debate. I asked the Department of Energy to give me a survey of the regional figures. The hon. Member for Dundee, East was right to say that there are regional variations. We have debated that at length in the House at other times. I would draw to the hon. Gentleman's attention the fact that before the Budget, and before the fuel duty increase, the price in Stornoway, although £1.89 now, was then £1.95. I accept that that is outside the national average, but that is another debate. However, there has been a reduction.

It is fascinating to look at the relative prices throughout the country. Last week, on Second Reading, we heard that there was a bias towards the strange thing called the south-east. However, the main area of low-price is still south Wales. The hon. Member for Dundee, East might be interested to know that the greatest differential in prices is between London and south Wales, with south Wales benefiting in the comparison. South Wales, Manchester, the Bury-Bradford region, Oxford, Abingdon and Portsmouth are being mentioned as low-price areas.

For the record, I must say that there was a rather loud interruption during the speech of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on Second Reading about the way in which those prices did not seem to impact upon the Workington area. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is an assiduous attender, and I thought that he would be with us at this stage. I asked my officials to check prices in the north-west so that we could see the comparison. They did so on 1 May. I am advised that there is strong competition in and around Manchester and Bradford, where prices are among the lowest in the country, at about £1.55 per gallon for four-star.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Moore: I see that the right hon. Gentleman recognises that.

The Department of Energy has had no report of especially high prices in the Workington area, but, as I wanted to be thorough, I thought it wise to check. My officials checked yesterday, and I am advised that four-star petrol sold at the Greenrow service station at Silloth, in Workington, is £1.65 a gallon. I accept that that does not totally answer some of the points made by the hon. Member for Dundee, East, but I am trying to say that the variations in prices across the regions are not dissimilar.

The essential point made in the debate by the hon. Members for Stockton, South and for Birmingham, Hodge Hill was about the Government's policies. They are embodied in clauses 2 and 3. I ask them to consider some other points in relation to the totality of taxation.

Mr. Wilson: The Minister was generous enough to say that he was not sure whether some of his arguments related to the points that I put forward. In that respect, I probably agree with him. I should like to bring to his attention a

[Mr. Wilson]

letter from the Scottish Motor Trade Association, dated 9 April, which was sent to all Scottish Members of Parliament. It said:

"We have been made aware . . . that the differentials between areas in England and Wales, and Scotland can be in excess of 20p per gallon. As the margin to the retailer is 7½p give or take a penny, it is fairly obvious that the price to the retailer is abnormally high in Scotland, as opposed to England."

The Minister will fully realise that, as Scotland is the oil-producing area of the United Kingdom, and has the highest prices on average, we feel bitter about that. How does he propose to use fiscal methods to try to even out the heavy weighting on consumers in Scotland, even at the expense of the Treasury? Alternatively, would he rather get his friends in another Department to put pressure on the oil companies to find a fairer system of zoning?

Mr. Moore: I have known the hon. Gentleman for a long time and have enjoyed debates and discussions on that issue, but the debate on clause 2, and in particular on this amendment, is not the occasion to debate whether to use fiscal methods. However, it is a legitimate area of discussion. I would not argue for using fiscal methods in relation to the price differentials.

Mr. Terry Davis: I think that we shall return to this subject when we discuss clause 3 in Committee upstairs. The Minister said that clauses 2 and 3 embodied the Government's policy. I assume that a policy is followed for more than one Budget—indeed, for several Budgets. Over the past six or seven years the percentage increase in the price of petrol has been greater than that of vehicle excise duty. Is it the Government's policy to transfer the motoring tax burden from VED to the price of petrol, as happened dramatically this year? That has tended to happen in previous years, too, and that is important. The Financial Secretary rightly says that to abolish VED would put up the price of petrol by 38p. I am not accusing the Government of trying to do that, but it seems to be the Government's policy that in future petrol increases will be disproportionately large.

Mr. Moore: I thought that I had made the position clear. I was paraphrasing the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in the Budget debate. With the substantial decline in petrol prices, it seemed reasonable to alter the balance in a modest way between VED and petrol. We have seen radical shifts in the price of that product in the past 16 years.

This matter was raised two or three times in the early part of the debate. It might be useful to remind the Committee of the changes. The amount of duty and tax as a percentage of price is now over 60 per cent. The figure was in the high 40s when the Government came to office. The House forgets where it was in 1969 and 1970. In 1969 it was 70 per cent., and in 1970 it was 69 per cent. I am not suggesting that it is the Government's policy to reach that point, but I am saying that there has been a radical shift.

I should like to remind the Committee of two further points. Compared with our competitors in Europe, the relative percentage of tax taken from a gallon at the pump is in the low 60s in the United Kingdom, 64 per cent. in Belgium, and 65 per cent. in Denmark——

Mr. Penhaligon: The Minister is not comparing like with like.

Mr. Moore: I am making a comparison with our continental competitors, which I thought was occasionally attractive to the alliance. The figure is 72 per cent. in France, 64 per cent. in Germany, 67 per cent. in Ireland, 76 per cent. in Italy and 66 per cent. in Holland.

The opposition parties believe that there should be a radical reduction. That is what I gather from the remarks of the hon. Member for Hodge Hill. That is what they want, as opposed to a modest continuation of the pattern of revalorisation. Where does the alliance think that the £140 million net revenue loss will be made up from? I accept that it is a massive burden on the motorist. In 1986-87 petrol is expected to produce £5·7 billion for the Exchequer. VED will produce £2·4 billion. It behoves those who seek to adjust and change where the taxation is levied to suggest where it will come from.

The amendment is a relative irrelevance because it ignors the way in which the Government have sought to maintain in real terms, successfully, the relatively modest burden on the motorist. I ask the Committee to reject the amendment. I imagine that we shall now no longer need to have a substantive debate on the Question, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Bermingham: As we shall not have a substantive debate on clause stand part, I should like to make a few remarks about the amendment and its application to clause 2. The Government seem to miss an important central point, which is that, in order to move a human being, goods or any other product from A to B in the United Kingdom, one uses motorised vehicles. The bulk of freight transport goes by motorised vehicles. The bulk of agricultural machinery is driven by diesel-powered vehicles. With regard to public transport, in rural areas people use cars because there are no buses left and in urban areas people use cars because the bus services are decreasing. But the bulk of public transport is moved by diesel fuel or petrol.

All that is reflected in our cost of living. If the Government want our cost of living to go down, and if they want industry to pick up, they should take into the equation the cost of getting to work, of transporting materials and of transporting the products produced by manufacturing industry. It is easy to say that if we reduced petrol or diesel oil prices, we would have to find all that extra taxation, but if we reduced the cost of our manufactured products and our transport costs, we would make ourselves more competitive, sell more goods, generate more wealth and therefore generate more tax-bearing income, and the equation would level out.

It is nonsense to compare the United Kingdom with non-oil-producing countries such as France and Germany. Why not equate the United Kingdom with other oil-producing countries such as Norway or America, and find out their percentages? If we managed to strike at the heart of the exorbitant fuel costs that we bear in this country, we might make ourselves more competitive and wealthier.

Clause 3, to which I shall return in Committee, relates to the whole concept that the motorist must pay, that, no matter what happens to the cost of oil, each year the Government will impose more vehicle excise duty and more petrol duty; regardless of what happens, in real terms, to the price of crude oil, everything becomes progressively more expensive. That is not good enough. The fall in the price of oil gave us an opportunity to make ourselves enormously competitive. All that was needed

was to get the Government to realise that they did not need so great a slice of the cake. Perhaps the Government will accept just for once that if manufacturing industry were to be given the chance of cheap fuel, England might be given the chance to create jobs by making goods that are competitive in world markets.

7 pm

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I wish to reply to some of the points that have been made during the debate, in particular those made by the Minister, whose reply was disappointing. The Government's view has been made no clearer. The Minister said that this year the Government have taken advantage of the reduction in the price of oil to make a small switch from vehicle excise duty to increasing the duty on petrol. However, when he was pressed by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) about whether that meant that the Government wished to move in that direction, he said that it might not happen next year. Therefore, we are not clear about the Government's intentions.

The Minister rightly drew attention to the Liberal party's discussion document, which advocates a move in the direction of reducing vehicle excise duty and increasing the duty on petrol. The position of the two parties was made clear by my hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) on the occasion to which the Minister referred. That remains the position. If the Minister had had time to read the document from cover to cover, instead of only looking at it, he would have seen that it was a green paper for internal discussion within the party and, indeed, for discussion by those outside the party.

As my hon. Friend said, we welcome the Minister's comments, which will be taken into account during the further discussion of these matters. The Social Democratic and Liberal parties produce green papers for discussion within our ranks and we have distributed many of them widely to outside bodies in order to obtain their comments before finalising our views on difficult and complicated matters of this kind. Our view remains that there should be a switch in the balance between vehicle excise duty and the duty on petrol. That is why we have tabled this amendment.

The alliance and the Scottish National party have made clear their view about car owners in rural areas being forced into even greater use of their cars because of the change in the public transport system imposed upon them by the Government. We are also aware that the increase in the price of petrol imposes an additional burden on users of motor cars in urban areas. My constituency covers both rural and urban areas. I should not like it to be thought that the alliance and the other Opposition parties are not equally anxious about the position of the motor car user in urban areas.

Mr. Wilson: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that I, too, represent a city constituency? In my area the average price of petrol is higher than in many other areas. That cost has to be borne in a constituency where the unemployment rate is 17·5 per cent.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I sympathise entirely with the hon. Gentleman's point. That applies to other right hon. and hon. Members with constituencies in the north of Scotland whose constituents have to bear exactly the same burden. There are refineries on Teesside where ICI petrol is produced, and as it is sold in the area we do not understand why petrol prices are not very much lower. My constituents have an advantage over those in the constituency of the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson), but, even though we enjoy the enormous benefit of petrol being refined on our doorstep, we do not enjoy lower petrol prices. Indeed, petrol prices are lower in other parts of the country where there are no refineries. The result is that companies and industries on Teesside, and also people in the rural part of my constituency, express strong feelings to me because the price of petrol imposes a substantial burden.

I am sorry that the Government were tempted by the reduction in the price of oil to increase the duty beyond the level of indexation. That is why my colleagues and I decided to table this modest amendment, which would reduce it to the level of indexation. I hope that the Committee will realise how modest a proposal this is and will support it in the Lobby.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 9, Noes 183.

Division No. 172] **[7.05 pm**

AYES

Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Wigley, Dafydd
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*	Wilson, Gordon
Kennedy, Charles	
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David	Tellers for the Ayes:
Steel, Rt Hon David	Mr. David Penhaligon and
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*	Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth.
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*	

NOES

Alexander, Richard	Cope, John
Amess, David	Corrie, John
Ashby, David	Couchman, James
Aspinwall, Jack	Cranborne, Viscount
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Critchley, Julian
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Crouch, David
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Evennett, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Eyre, Sir Reginald
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Fairbairn, Nicholas
Bellingham, Henry	Fallon, Michael
Bendall, Vivian	Favell, Anthony
Benyon, William	Fookes, Miss Janet
Bevan, David Gilroy	Fox, Marcus
Blackburn, John	Franks, Cecil
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Freeman, Roger
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Gale, Roger
Bottomley, Peter	Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Gorst, John
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*	Gower, Sir Raymond
Bright, Graham	Gregory, Conal
Brinton, Tim	Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Brooke, Hon Peter	Grist, Ian
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Grylls, Michael
Bryan, Sir Paul	Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Buck, Sir Antony	Hampson, Dr Keith
Budgen, Nick	Harris, David
Bulmer, Esmond	Harvey, Robert
Burt, Alistair	Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*	Hayes, J.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Hayward, Robert
Chapman, Sydney	Hickmet, Richard
Chope, Christopher	Hicks, Robert
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*	Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*	Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*	Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*	Hordern, Sir Peter
Clegg, Sir Walter	Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Cockeram, Eric	Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Colvin, Michael	Jackson, Robert
Conway, Derek	Jessel, Toby
Coombs, Simon	Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*

Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

The Temporary Chairman (Mr. David Knox): We come now to amendments Nos. 2 and 3.

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): It may be for the convenience of the Committee if I do not move these amendments now, but wait until Report.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 171, Noes 83.

Division No. 173] **[7.20 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Francis Maude and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clay, Robert
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ewing, Harry
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Leighton, Ronald
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
Marek, Dr John
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Meacher, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Raynsford, Nick
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Rogers, Allan
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Tinn, James
Wareing, Robert
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. James Hamilton.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill (Clauses 2, 15, 26 and 80), reported, without amendment; to lie upon the Table.

House of Commons Crest (Circulars)

7.31 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are probably aware that at 3.30 I raised a point of order on the use of the House of Commons emblem on circulars. Mr. Speaker asked me to get hold of some evidence of this apparent abuse of our logo.

As you probably know, Sir, the instruction sent out by the Serjeant at Arms says that circulars must not be used with the

> "Crowned portcullis or the Royal Arms, whether or not associated with the words 'House of Commons' . . . in connection with . . . supporting the return of any person to public office."

I have a facsimile of what must be a circular which has been circulating in the constituency of Derbyshire, West. It is signed by the leader of the Liberal party. I understand that that is not a unique signature but a facsimile signature. It has been dispatched to Mr. Stuart and Ann Ashworth.

One might believe that there was some method in the madness here, that it was not a circular and that certain people have been picked out, but I understand that Mr. Stuart Ashworth is the chairman of the local Conservative club.

If that is not persuasive, I have a copy of a further circular which was signed by the leader of the Liberal party in facsimile, addressed to "Dear Resident". At the top it has "From the Right hon. David Steel MP" and there, before your very eyes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are the words "House of Commons" and the logo.

We have clear instructions from the Serjeant at Arms. It is possible that the right hon. Gentleman has perpetrated this dreadful deed in ignorance of the instructions and it may well be that he would wish to ensure that all the circulars are hastily withdrawn. In view of the great urgency of the matter I would appreciate it if you could give the House the benefit of your advice, and perhaps even the leader of the Liberal party the benefit of a short, sharp instruction.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is not so much the logo that appalls one, as the text that goes with it. May I draw your attention to the words in this letter?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I was in the House when the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) raised the matter with Mr. Speaker and Mr. Speaker asked for the evidence. I shall see that the evidence is transmitted to Mr. Speaker, so that he can give his judgment.

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Lawrence.

Mr. Lawrence: May I develop my argument so that it can be brought to the attention of Mr. Speaker when he comes to consider the matter rather more fully? The text which is associated with the logo says ridiculous things such as:

> "We have reached a crucial point in our history in Britain. Are we going to pull ourselves"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It was not the text of the document that was raised with me but the question whether the practices of the House had been transgressed.

Mr. Lawrence: The point of raising this further point of order is to protect the reputation of the House. If the text with which this logo is associated is so banal, fatuous and absurd, it will bring the House of Commons into disrepute. Surely it is only right that we should appeal to the protection that you give, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that Mr. Speaker gives to the House to stop such an absurdity. I hope that the ruling will cause the withdrawal of something which will make it much more difficult for us to face our constituents when we return to our constituencies.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe that the leader of the Liberal party is in the House and that he bothered to vote in the Division that has just taken place. If he is so concerned about this matter, why is he not in the Chamber now to defend himself? Are we to wait until you say that the matter has been referred? Is not the need for action now, not tomorrow or the day after? Either justice is done in the House or it is nothing at all. Let us have a ruling now, not tomorrow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: My ruling is that I shall send the document to Mr. Speaker for his judgment straightaway.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have all in our time enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. Speaker, but we do not need to wait for a dinner. Let us have a ruling now, not after dinner. The urgency is now, not later. Justice is now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I take note of the hon. Gentleman's comments and they will be conveyed to Mr. Speaker immediately.

British Shipbuilders (Borrowing Powers) Bill

Considered in Committee.

[MR. ERNEST ARMSTRONG *in the Chair*]

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.
Bill to be reported, without amendment.
Order for Third Reading read.

7.37 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

As the House will appreciate, we debated at length this important and serious Bill only eight or nine days ago. Rather than detain the House at this stage with a long speech, I hope that I shall be able to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the end and, with the permission of the House, respond to the debate.

7.38 pm

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): In his brief opening remarks the Minister said that the Bill was debated on Second Reading only eight or nine days ago. I regret that it appears that the passing of eight or nine days is neither here nor there for the Minister; but my hon. Friends are entitled to say to the Minister that even eight or nine days are crucial, certainly for Britain's merchant shipyards. We have had to explain to the Minister and his predecessors that it is no good waiting for work to be completed to take serious measures to secure further orders. Even if orders were secured immediately for yards in my constituency — Sunderland Shipbuilders and Austin and Pickersgill — there would be a problem of lay-offs because of the lead-in time to order and cut steel, even if the orders were for fairly conventional work such as has been done before.

It is important that the Minister should tell us whether the Government are prepared to take radical and drastic measures to ensure that British Shipbuilders' additional borrowing powers are not pointless. We do not want to hear again tales of what a generous allocation this is and how the Government have given, grossed up and indexed, about £1·3 billion since 1979, which is what the Bill is really about.

When the Minister or his colleagues talk about the level of subsidy to British shipbuilding, they might reflect on the report of the Select Committee on Agriculture. That Committee found that just storing cereal products under EEC intervention arrangements costs about £190 million a year. The Select Committee suspects that the cost is higher, and in a footnote, says:

"we note that the Public Expenditure White Paper puts the figure at £371 million".

Is there not something profoundly wrong with a Government who seem to take it for granted that more public money should be spent on storing cereal products, which should be going to starving people, than on supporting the shipbuilding industry in an island nation? There is nothing for the Minister to be proud of. There should be more money and it should be better directed.

There is little accountability in the House concerning British Shipbuilders' financial arrangements. I remember my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field)

mentioning the £37 million which appears to have found its way to Harland and Wolff without anybody knowing how. I notice that the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the National Audit Office, entitled "Department of Trade and Industry: Assistance to British Shipbuilders", says:

"In carrying out this examination the NAO had access to the records of the DTI but not to those of BS."

I am increasingly worried about British Shipbuilders' arrangements to make the best use of its funds to secure orders, especially for merchant shipyards. When we talk of intervention fund money or credit arrangements, we are talking about merchant shipbuilding. I hope that the Minister will explain what the Government are doing to persuade the EEC to take a more serious and urgent attitude towards an increase, rather than a decrease, in intervention fund money.

I understand that the most recent written answer on the subject referred to a further meeting in July. I hope that the Minister understands that it takes so long to produce orders that any improvement then would no longer be relevant. July meetings will not help the plight of British merchant yards now.

One thing that the Government could do immediately —I mentioned this on Second Reading—would be to clarify what they are prepared to do about soft-credit packages. There has been a continuing controversy about what the Prime Minister did or did not say to me and other shop stewards when she met us a couple of weeks ago.

I understand from Mr. Chris Moncrieff of the Press Association—I have his permission to say this—that when he telephoned Gleneagles, where the Prime Minister had gone the night after the meeting with me and trade union colleagues in Newcastle, one of her aides was able to confirm our account of that meeting. The only dispute was that the Prime Minister claimed that the policies that she announced were not new.

I understand from Mr. Philip Murphy of Thomson Newspapers that he spoke to a press officer at Downing street yesterday, who said:

"She recognised we were now in a position to beat anyone other than the Japanese on credit terms. We are going to carry on being as imaginative and inventive as we possibly can to ensure that our packages are as good as possible."

There is now clear confirmation that the Government are saying — the Prime Minister said it — that they are prepared to undercut any country on credit terms, other than Japan. I hope that, as that has been confirmed by Downing street, the Minister will withdraw his earlier statement that that would be a ridiculous thing to say. The Prime Minister is saying it, so he had better square his act with her.

There is no reason why the Government should not pursue such a policy. It is one of the few policies that the Government could adopt immediately which would give us some chance of securing orders in merchant shipyards. I am not altogether surprised that the Government should have evolved, changed, or whatever they want to call it, to such a policy. During the debate on the Queen's Speech, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, said:

"I should like to announce today important changes in the scope and scale of the aid and trade provision—an instrument effective both in providing aid to developing countries and in helping British companies with overseas contracts . . . First, with the full co-operation of the financial community, we are introducing a new soft loan facility. Banks will make long-term loans at low interest rates available to recipient countries for financing sound development projects agreed intergovernmentally." — [*Official Report*, 12 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 482.]

I was never clear—the question was asked at the time—whether such a package for civil engineering and manufacturing applied to merchant shipbuilding. I take it from what is being said from Downing street, irrespective of what the Minister says, that such arrangements apply to merchant shipbuilding, and I should like the Minister to confirm it. If he says that that has always been Government policy, so be it. If he says that it has been Government policy for the past year or two, he must tell us why quite a number of orders, especially to Third-world countries, have been lost.

Other European countries have provided better soft credit packages. I am not bothered about arguing about the past, although it is quite clear that orders have been lost. It is sufficiently on the record that the Government are saying that, from now on, we will not lose out because of credit arrangements, unless we are competing with Japan.

The Minister should clear the matter up so that British Shipbuilders, the trade unions, the work force and hon. Members know that that is Government policy. If we feel that British shipbuilding is not making sufficient use of that policy in the desperate days that lie ahead, sufficient pressure can be exerted to ensure that it does. We do not want to hear any more about open doors on which British Shipbuilders does not knock.

As I said in the previous debate, it is extraordinary that the Minister should say that British Shipbuilders has never come to the Department of Trade and Industry and asked for help on special arrangements through the intervention fund. British Shipbuilders is justified in having that record only if it has not lost a single order for want of trying. I want the Minister to tell us that the door is still open, that if British Shipbuilders asks for help it will get it, that there is a soft loan policy to help us to get orders, especially from developing countries, and that the Government will enthusiastically pursue that policy.

Other than orders that are directly within the Government's gift—there are not many of those and the Government do not seem to be shifting on the most important one, the FSK — the only chance of the merchant yards surviving will be the sort of orders that I mentioned. The Government must have a far more dynamic and serious attitude than they have displayed so far.

7.51 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The last line in the first paragraph of the explanatory memorandum is somewhat disconcerting. It states:

"The new limit will be £1,300."

It is obviously an error, but it was a little worrying.

We have a campaign in Scotland with the initials SOSS — Save our Scottish Steel. Now we need another — SOSY, or Save our Scottish Yards. There are few remaining. Govan is in parlous circumstances. Ferguson-Ailsa has yards in my constituency at Port Glasgow and in the constituency of the Secretary of State for Defence at Troon. We have the last remaining marine engineering plant within British Shipbuilders — Clark-Kincaid — which still has a plant down on the Tyne. All those yards are encountering appalling problems.

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

With regard to the extension of the limit on borrowing, have there been recent discussions between the Minister's Department and Associated Container Line on the lengthening of several of its vessels? I understand that tenders have been sought for this work. If that shipping line chooses to lengthen its vessels in that way, would there be any possibility of financial assistance to that line or to British Shipbuilders if the contracts were awarded to British Shipbuilders' yards?

I hope to meet Mr. Eric Parker, the chairman of Scott Lithgow, which is no longer with British Shipbuilders, to discuss what could be an important order for British shipbuilding yards. Can the Minister offer me any assurances about assistance to the last remaining British Shipbuilders' yards in Scotland? The remaining yards in the control of British Shipbuilders in the north-east of England have been brought together in one enterprise, which I believe is called North-East Shipbuilders. Have there been discussions between the Department and British Shipbuilders about a similar development on the Clyde, which would bring together Govan, Ferguson-Ailsa and Clark-Kincaid?

May I also stress to the Minister, as I did on Second Reading, that flexibility in the intervention fund is crucial. So, too, are good credit and loan facilities for British Shipbuilders.

7.55 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Obviously, we welcome any assistance that can be given to British Shipbuilders, even if it comes as a result of additional borrowing powers. However, the Bill does not create one order——

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Or one job.

Mr. Dixon: Or one job, as my hon. Friend says.

On Second Reading, the Minister talked about the money that British Shipbuilders had received since nationalisation. The Government say that British Shipbuilders should be competitive, but we should compare like with like. I worked in the industry when it was in private hands, and I remember the problems caused by lack of investment. Many companies that have been privatised since then face similar problems.

At the age of 14, I joined Palmer's yard at Hebburn as a shipwright. I know a little about the industry, although only from underneath ships in the fo'c's'le or the double bottoms. I was working in the industry in 1962, when the Patton report was published. Later, the Geddes report suggested some rationalisation of the industry, said that it was not market-oriented enough and wanted amalgamations. The Booz-Allen report of 1972 criticised the shipbuilding industry and suggested that there had been a lack of investment while it was in private hands. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is in the Chamber. It is right to point out to him, because he may not appreciate it, the fact that British Shipbuilders has been operating at a disadvantage for many years.

A survey conducted in the early 1970s showed that, for every shipbuilding worker in British yards, there were assets of £825. In Germany, the amount was more than £1,000; in Italy, it was more than £1,200; in Spain, it was more than £1,800; and in Japan, it was more than £2,600.

Another matter that has not been pointed out during our long debates on shipbuilding is the effect that closures, unemployment and redundancies have on communities such as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay). To show how close-knit shipbuilding communities are, a survey conducted at Austin and Pickersgill showed that 37 per cent. of those employed in the yard lived within one mile of the yard, and only 1·5 per cent. of employees lived more than five miles away. A survey conducted at Swan Hunter's Wallsend yard showed that 62 per cent. of the employees lived in Wallsend or the adjacent towns. That should give the Government some idea of the close-knit shipbuilding communities.

Those communities are similar to the mining communities. We have had many debates on the mining industry. The mining communities are closely knit with the mines, as the shipbuilding communities are with shipbuilding. Redundancies and shipyard closures are catastrophes.

A survey in the Tyneside shipbuilding area showed that shipbuilding accounts for 44 per cent. of male employment in Wallsend, and we know of the present state of shipbuilding. In South Shields, 18 per cent. of male employment relies on shipbuilding, in Jarrow it is 16 per cent., and in North Shields it is 12 per cent. That shows how we rely on shipbuilding for jobs in our areas. I hope that the Minister will make constructive suggestions, and not merely say that the shipyards can increase their borrowing.

On Second Reading we suggested a scrap-and-build policy. We have discussed that for many years. The only way to create orders is by scrap and build — by encouraging shipowners to scrap some fairly old ships and to rebuild, placing orders in British shipyards. That is the sort of constructive suggestion that we want to make. Much of what has been said about shipbuilding has been said previously because we feel strongly about it.

Shipbuilding, like shipping, is a national strategic industry and needs a declared maritime policy. The Trade and Industry Select Committee produced a report in 1981, one of the first recommendations of which was that we should have a national maritime policy, co-ordinated by a senior Cabinet Minister and formed in consultation with trade unions, British shipbuilders and the shipping industry. That is the sort of positive policy that we want to hear from the Minister. I know that he cannot give that sort of reply tonight, but I hope that he will take those comments on board.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker—no one knows better than you how our area relies on traditional industries such as mining and shipbuilding—I wish to quote from an article printed in the *Sunderland Echo* on 23 July 1985:

"Any further contraction in shipbuilding and in engineering activities on the north east coast would do irreparable damage to the future of the nation . . . If the skills and knowledge invested in this area were lost through any further contraction they would never be regained . . . This would be a great loss to the nation as a whole as they were the skills which would be needed in the future. All good men and true the length and breadth of the north east coast should come forward to join a concerted bid to save the industry. Now is the time for all men of good standing who are interested in this country and its future to forget their political and other differences and speak out for the sake of the nation!"

Those were the words, not of the general secretary of the General Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union or of some shop steward from Austin and Pickersgill, but of the former chairman of British Shipbuilders, Sir Robert Atkinson. I hope that the Minister will take those words on board when he replies.

8.2 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): This has been a short but important debate, and the speeches of my hon. Friends reflect their concern about the shipbuilding communities which they represent. I hope that it is a measure of the Government's concern about the matter that both the Minister and the Secretary of State are present this evening.

We fear that, despite the permission which is granted in the Bill for the Government to raise the borrowing requirement of British Shipbuilders, no sanction is being given to increase borrowing. It is not an offer of increased borrowing. Our fear is that the merchant shipbuilding industry, which has been halved during the past seven years, will continue to decline, even with the Bill on the statute book.

Yesterday in an answer to me the Minister confirmed the critical position of the yards that have been mentioned. He will agree that without further orders Ferguson-Ailsa has no work beyond September 1986, Smiths has none beyond December 1986, Austin and Pickersgill has none beyond December 1986, Govan, which is completing a major ferry order, has none beyond March 1987, and that Sunderland Shipbuilders has as yet no work beyond March 1987. I hope the whole House will recognise that the merchant side of the shipbuilding industry is at the point of no return, unless the Government and British Shipbuilders are able to secure the orders that are desperately needed to retain the work force and save the yards.

As my hon. Friends the Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) and for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) have pointed out, the areas already have substantial unemployment rates. The rate of unemployment in Glasgow as a whole is 18 per cent., in Greenock it is 22 per cent., in Sunderland it is more than that, and in Middlesbrough it is even higher. My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North will confirm that near the shipyards he represents unemployment is as high as 45 per cent., and that many included in that figure are shipbuilding workers who have already been made redundant.

The Minister will probably have seen British Shipbuilders' estimate of the jobs that will be lost, if no further orders are provided. Will he confirm that if no further orders are forthcoming by December 1986 or the beginning of 1987, nearly 4,000 blue-collar jobs are at risk in the British Shipbuilders group, that if white-collar jobs are included, more than 5,000 jobs are at risk, and that if we include those who are dependent on the work created within British Shipbuilders, the number is substantially higher. I hope that the Minister will describe in more detail than he did in reply to Second Reading what the Government will do to retain those jobs and to maintain the yards in being.

Mr. Frank Field: Serious as the loss of those jobs is, do not the communities face a further danger, namely, that if shipyards close, we lose the training centres for skilled manpower? Cammell Laird has a training school which trains practically all the skilled tradesmen in Merseyside. If anything happened to that company, not only would those jobs be lost but also the chance of ever returning to a period of economic growth in the region would be severely retarded.

Mr. Brown: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend, and the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow. We are talking about the future of communities. If, during the next few months, jobs are lost in the yards and the yards reach the point of no return, adult jobs will disappear and there will be no opportunities for young people, whether or not on youth training schemes. That is why I wish to put three points to the Minister.

First, what will the Minister do to make it possible for the merchant yards to secure the maximum number of public-sector orders and, indeed, to advance them where possible so that the yards can remain in being? Yesterday, in an answer to me the Minister could only confirm that there were three orders from the public sector for which British Shipbuilders could tender during the next few months — a fisheries protection vessel, a passenger vehicle ferry and a smaller passenger ferry for the Orkney islands. While the orders are welcome—I know that at least two of them are at present being tendered for—the Minister should be consulting the Ministry of Defence and other Departments about how they can advance the public-sector orders which, particularly in the case of the Ministry of Defence, are urgently needed, and how by advancing those orders they can secure the future of the yards.

The second question has already been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North, and relates to the intervention fund. The position that the Minister put to us on Second Reading seems less than satisfactory from the point of view of British Shipbuilders' activities. The Minister said that at no point had his Department been approached to use the flexibility that is available to British Shipbuilders in securing a higher amount of funding from the intervention fund so as to get orders, so that in the case, for example, of the order that British Nuclear Fuels plc placed in Japan it appears that British Shipbuilders had not even bothered to ask the Department whether there would be greater flexibility in the resources available from the intervention fund. I hope that the Minister can satisfy us that he has made it clear to British Shipbuilders that he will look favourably at applications that would secure greater flexibility and, therefore, greater funding, so that orders could be achieved.

Mr. Clay: Does my hon. Friend not think that another lesson could be learned from the particular example that he gave? The Prime Minister's explanation of the loss of that order was that, because the main trading nation whose waste would be carried by the ship was Japan, the Japenese Government insisted that the ship be built in Japan. In that case, it seems to have been a political decision rather than a mainly financial one. Does my hon. Friend not think that it is extraordinary that the Japanese can not only oblige their own shipowners to build in Japanese yards but can oblige foreigners to do so as well? Should the Government not take a leaf out of the Japanese Government's book?

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend has a point and it has not yet been answered satisfactorily by the Government, why that order, which was vital to the yard represented by my hon. Friend, was lost, and why it is that Governments who seem to have least to gain do most while we, an island, a maritime nation, whose shipbuilding industry is directly related to our defence needs, we who have the most to gain, seem to be able to do least to secure orders that are essential for the maintenance of our shipyards.

[Mr. Brown]

Also on the intervention fund, what are the Government doing in Europe to secure a proper continuation of the arrangements that would guarantee support and subvention when new orders were being competed for? When the Minister was battling in Brussels last year, he had to accept the watering down of his original demand of 35 per cent. to no more than 20 per cent. I am talking about the Under-Secretary who is not here this evening. When he started negotiations in Brussels a few weeks ago, he seemed to be talking about free market theories, suggesting that there should be an end to worldwide subsidies, suggesting that Europe might take the lead in stopping the business of buying orders and implying that Britain might be prepared to accept a lower amount of subvention as a result of the present negotiations. I hope that the Minister is in a position to confirm that the Government will fight to continue at least the existing level of support, and will not settle for less as a result of the pressure of the commissioner for competition and pressure of other member states.

The third point that has been raised by all three of my colleagues is what packages British Shipbuilders is able to offer, and what packages are available to both British shipowners and other shipowners if they will buy British. When the Prime Minister met representatives of the trade union side of Sunderland Shipbuilders, she seemed to give an assurance—indeed a guarantee—that no orders would be lost because we could not match credit packages offered by other countries. I have the advantage of having here a minute prepared by the trade union side on these conversations, a minute that appears to have been confirmed by statements from Downing street to the Press Association.

The Prime Minister said that no orders would be lost because another country had provided a more attractive credit arrangement. She said that the one exception to this would be Japan. She said that, with the exception of Japan, Britain could compete successfully on soft loan arrangements. Whether she was announcing a new policy or whether that was a continuation of a policy announced in October or whether that has been Government policy for some time is immaterial. Are the Government in a position to say to British Shipbuilders and to the shipyard workers that no order will be lost because of a failure to offer sufficiently attractive credit terms to compete at least with every other country except Japan?

What the Minister's Department has said to the Committee looking at the future of the European maritime industry, what the Under-Secretary appears to have said in his negotiations with the Commission and what is stated in the National Audit Office report on British Shipbuilders does not seem to confirm what the Prime Minister has been saying. The Minister may read the evidence given by his Department to the Committee in another place, which made it absolutely clear that, in the Department's view, other countries were able to beat us because of their ability to offer better credit and better loan packages.

In the negotiations in the Commission, the Under-Secretary appeared to be saying that France and Germany could do far better than Britain when it came to producing packages. Worse than that, from the report prepared by the National Audit Office it appears that the Government have told British Shipbuilders that they were limiting its ability to take on new subsidised work.

Whether that report has the position right, I do not know, but the Minister could resolve this whole question very easily tonight by telling us that he is in a position to say, on behalf of his Department, that in future no orders will be lost which could save and secure the future of the yards in British Shipbuilders, that no orders will be lost because of a failure to offer proper credit and loan packages.

Since the Second Reading of this Bill, the Minister will have had a chance to study the recommendations of the Committee which sat in another place and which was looking at the future of the European maritime industry. Perhaps he will take on board its recommendation, that the Government should give urgent consideration to longer periods of repayment of shipbuilding loans. He might also take on board the recommendations made by the Committee and by Opposition Members that there should be adequate and appropriate assistance available to British shipowners to buy British, repair British, and sell British, because that is in the interests of the future not only of our industry but also of our defence and of the maintenance of a proper level of merchant fleet. Perhaps the Minister is in a position tonight to tell us that he will take these recommendations seriously and act on them quickly.

The Minister gave us reassurances on the Second Reading of this Bill. He said that the Government were as interested as Opposition Members and shipyard workers in maintaining the merchant shipbuilding yards. The Government have given us reassurances for the past seven years, as the numbers employed in merchant shipbuilding have continued to fall and as they are still falling now. Perhaps when he gives us reassurances the Minister should recall what Sir Robert Atkinson, a former chairman of British Shipbuilders, said, that while reassurances were being given in public, in private at no point did Ministers ask him, as the chairman of British Shipbuilders, about the future of the industry, about research and development and about maintaining jobs, but that when he talked about redundancies and unemployment in the industry a glean came into their eyes. The Minister will have to give us more than verbal reassurances if we are to believe that the Government are committed to maintaining the present level of jobs in the industry.

We now have a new chairman of British Shipbuilders, a new Bill extending the borrowing requirement and a new company in the north east which is charged with managing the Sunderland and Middlesbrough shipyards. Apparently we have a new system of financial control that has been dealt with in the National Audit Office report. We need from the Government new orders to retain jobs, save the yards and secure the future of an industry which is vital to our trade and industry, to our shipbuilding communities and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow has said, to our defence needs.

8.20 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): As the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has said, this has been a short debate. None the less, I agree that it has been very important. I assure him that I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State perceive the shipbuilding industry in precisely that context.

As the House knows, British Shipbuilders is facing a very difficult time. As the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East pointed out, in referring to a parliamentary answer

which I gave him recently, it is in a very critical position. The fact remains that world capacity outstrips demand. The hon. Gentleman rightly stated that the key was new orders. He referred to help that we may be able to give, but he, and I hope all hon. Gentlemen, will agree that the price of the ship, the quality of the design and the delivery date are key and important matters which any prospective purchaser of a ship will wish to take carefully into account.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to confirm the number of jobs which may be at risk. I do not wish to dodge the question but I cannot confirm the specific numbers which he gave. Although I have stated that I am not running away from reality, I do not wish to be as pessimistic as the hon. Gentleman was.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) referred to training which will take place in all parts of the country, including the north-east. I know personally the apprentice training school to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I take on board fully the point which he made.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East asked me to co-ordinate — I think that is the right word — public sector orders. He welcomed the prospect of orders. Again, I refer to my reply to him recently. He asked me to put forward the case of the FSK 20/20. I dealt with that last week. One has to take into account the fact that, if the FSK 20/20 is ordered regardless, other ships or submarines which are currently further up the list of priorities of the Ministry of Defence may not be ordered.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) asked about the intervention fund. I confirm 100 per cent. that I am prepared to consider seriously any prospective increase in flexibility in the intervention fund.

Reference was made to the loss of the BNFL ship to a Japanese yard. All hon. Members will be aware that that was the fifth ship ordered by BNFL. The company is jointly owned by Japanese, French and British interests. The first four ships had been built in the United Kingdom. The tender for the fifth ship was so low that it was impossible for British Shipbuilders to compete. However, it is pursuing an anti-dumping case in Brussels.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North inquired about what we were doing on the intervention fund and what arrangements we would make after the conclusion of the fifth directive at the end of the year. I understand the point he made about having to wait too long. I hope that he will understand my point of view—that it is not a moveable feast and that the Government cannot act unilaterally. It is a matter for joint action.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East referred to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State being at the Council of Ministers. I do not want to repeat what I said last week but at this early stage we are seeking to ensure that we know precisely what subsidies, whether through the intervention fund or otherwise, are going to other European Governments so that when we come to the negotiations, which we have not reached yet, we will be in a position to ensure that we are trading on a like with like basis. That is precisely our objective.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North and the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East pressed me about our position on soft loans. I do not think that there is a great difference of opinion between the hon. Gentleman and myself. The United Kingdom stands ready to be as imaginative and competitive as any of its competitors in putting forward packages. I hope that, on reflection, the hon. Member for Sunderland, North will realise that to push me on the details of any particular loan that may be under consideration might not be in the interests of British Shipbuilders and of the United Kingdom. One has to tread carefully on these matters. I do not think that it is in the interests of British Shipbuilders that everything is made known automatically to the world and his wife.

Mr. Clay: I understand what the Minister is saying. The point has been made to me by his predecessors and by senior managers in British Shipbuilders. Can the Minister understand my frustration? Despite the argument about commercial secrecy and about it being better not to show all one's cards openly, how is it that British Shipbuilders always seems to know the precise terms offered by its competitors before the orders are placed? In other words, if the Italian Government can be open about the soft credit arrangements they are making and an Italian yard can still get an order, why must British Shipbuilders be so secretive?

Mr. Morrison: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, he may be looking at the matter too simplistically. It is not as simple as he makes out. The negotiations and dealings are very complicated. The last thing that he would want me to do, and the last thing that I would want to do, would be, as it were, to play the poker hand right up front and as a result not to win the order. I have stated the current position, which I hope is helpful.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Despite what he calls the imagination of the Government and of British Shipbuilders, is the Minister not worried that new orders are not being won? Is there not a need for a more imaginative examination of the system of soft loans and credit packages? Will he agree that that at least will be done, if just to satisfy himself that what the Prime Minister told my hon. Friend is accurate?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman pushes me to be even more imaginative, even more flexible and even more generous. I have listened carefully to what he has said, but I shall not be pushed publicly from the position which I hold, for reasons which I hope he will readily understand.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) reasonably and understandably talked of the Scottish dimension. I would be blind and deaf if I did not realise how big the Scottish dimension was in terms of the Scottish economy. He asked whether there had been discussions between ACL and my Department. I understand that ACL is a consortium of a number of different interests, including Trafalgar House. As the hon. Gentleman will know, it has recently announced its intention to enlarge four of its recently built ships, including the Atlantic Conveyor. It has invited tenders from a number of United Kingdom, European and Japanese yards. It has not approached my Department for assistance.

The hon. Gentleman might be disappointed, but as the tenders are currently framed, intervention fund support would not be available. However, assistance through the home credit scheme for shipbuilding could be available. I do not say that it will be available.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow also asked about flexibility within the intervention fund. I have already dealt with that. He questioned whether a coming together of the Scottish yards would be sensible on the basis of the coming together of the north-east yards. That

[Mr. Morrison]

is a matter for British Shipbuilders. It must make the proposals, but it has not yet done so. I heard what the hon. Gentleman said about that.

The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) told us—he knows better than any one—about the importance of the shipbuilding industry, not just to his constituency and the north-east but to the country and its history. He reminded us of the effect which redundancies and closures can have on tightly knit communities. I well understand his remarks; I am deeply concerned about redundancies and closures of any sort.

The hon. Member asked me again to consider the idea of scrap and build. That policy was abandoned 50 years ago because it did not seem to be sensible or economic. That remains so. The hon. Gentleman also cajoled me in an effort to persuade me to adopt a national maritime policy. I can assure him that both shipbuilding and shipping are co-ordinated.

The debate last week and the debate tonight on the Bill have been considered and serious. They have not been party political and I welcome that. They have been debates about an important and great industry which is going through a critical and difficult time.

I commend the Bill to the House because it increases the borrowing limit of £1,200 million by £100 million now and a possible further £100 million. I commend the Bill because it will go some way towards ensuring that British shipbuilding can continue, albeit with difficult and critical decisions ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Stockstone Quarry, Hindhead

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

8.35 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I appreciate the opportunity provided by this debate to draw attention to a subject of grave concern and interest in my constituency. I refer to the proposal that Stockstone quarry near Hindhead should be used over a five-year period to deposit London rubbish, involving perhaps 84 movements a day of unwieldy and potentially dangerous 32-tonne lorries through our narrow, winding country lanes. This is to take place in an area of outstanding natural beauty in the heart of the green belt.

The final insult to local opinion and sensitivity is that it may be possible to permit such an affront to our rural environment on the basis of a condition set by a planning agreement over 30 years ago to a now defunct local authority.

I have already made a number of representations to the Minister about Stockstone quarry. I have visited the quarry and had a number of meetings and discussions with local activists and other elected representatives.

As a general rule, planning is not directly the responsibility of a Member of Parliament—nor should it be. Only in exceptional cases such as this have I personally become involved. I am a staunch supporter of the Government's green belt policy. I have no doubt that our green belt policy is a triumph of post-war planning. With increasing pressure in the south-east, I believe that concerned. Members must be vigilant in ensuring that our rural areas are protected from the threat of erosion.

The case of Stockstone quarry presents a potential precedent for many similar areas. Because of that, I am, exceptionally, seeking the Minister's intervention. I have little doubt that the Minister will say that the Secretary of State is sympathetic to our predicament, but that it does not meet the criteria used for decisions of this kind.

I appreciate the enormous pressure on the Department to call in inquiries and that this power must, in the public interest, be used sparingly; otherwise local responsibility for planning decisions would be undermined. Whether or not, even in the light of my arguments, the Minister is able to intervene, I am anxious to draw to the attention of the House and the Department of the Environment the implications of such a travesty of natural justice and common sense for others throughout the country who may, in their ignorance, believe that our planning laws protect green belt areas and areas of outstanding natural beauty from such outrages.

Are the criteria used by the Minister statutory or discretionary? If the Secretary of State argues that he is without power in this case, surely that must be a sign that the criteria are wrong and should be changed.

Stockstone quarry is situated less than 50 miles from London. However, reaching the quarry involves a journey along winding, country lanes, whose width in places is little over 11 ft. The quarry is dug to a depth of 100 ft and a width of about 700 ft. It covers 9·6 acres.

To appreciate the strength of feeling on the matter it is important to understand the quarry's history. The quarry started in 1929 with two men on one lever breaking out boulders with horse-drawn transport. At that time the area

of work comprised less than one acre. In 1938 work ceased and the quarry was abandoned until further work, recommenced in 1971.

In 1952 the Hambledon rural district council granted permission to the absentee owner of Stockstone quarry, imposing eight conditions. One of those conditions was that the quarry should be infilled with materials suitable for plant growth. That is being used as the justification for the current proposals. Some minor work restarted in the early 1970s, but the first high level of work, with the associated intrusion, disturbance and pollution, began later in the 1970s. In 1979 the quarry changed hands and the intensity of work increased.

In 1981 the quarry was bought by A. J. Bull, which still owns it. Initially there were difficulties over the blasting of the rock and this caused distress to residents in the immediate vicinity. By the following year local residents complained that at times they were experiencing one 32-tonne lorry every two minutes, that local lanes were frequently blocked at busy times, that the roads were dirty and dangerous and that the noise and vibrations were causing further disturbance.

It was at that stage that the Stockstone quarry working action committee was formed to represent local opinion in the face of increasing frustration over requests that activities be curbed. It is a source of considerable worry to me that the Stockstone quarry working action committee has had to raise considerable amounts of money to pursue its reasonable and fair case. I applaud the group's persistent and painstaking work.

The members of the group represent residents of Hindhead, Beacon Hill, Stock Farm, Churt, Frensham, Lower Bourne, Farnham, Pitch Place, Tilford, Elstead and Thursley — beautiful areas, many of them villages, in my constituency, where planning permissions are fiercely resisted and every effort is made to maintain the character and rural nature of the locality. It can be appreciated that when permission to erect an extension to a house, for example, is a matter of great local controversy, the provocative nature of the development of a quarry causes mounting local feeling and anger.

Whatever the debate and struggles of the past, it was at the end of 1984 that a whole further generation of difficulties emerged. At that time, A. J. Bull applied initially on a planning application form for permission to fill the quarry with classes A, C and D rubbish. It proposed 1·5 million cu m volume with 360 lorry journeys a week for the next five years. It is believed that the county council returned the application advising A. J. Bull to proceed as if with a submission of details in accordance with the conditions set out in the 1952 permission. That course left the local residents with no formal powers to resist the application. It will be appreciated that the proposals under consideration will affect the daily lives of many people for many years to come. Understandably, That greatly offends my constituents' view of the way in which decisions should be taken in a democratic society.

Since then the local elected bodies, the parishes of Frensham, Elstead, Tilford and Thursley, together with the town council of Haslemere, have all made their views abundantly clear about the proposals. Similarly, the local Waverley borough council rejected the application unanimously.

At considerable expense, the local activists applied to the High Court for a judicial review of the matter. Had they been successful, the result might have been that the county council had to treat the matter as a fresh application. In that case, it might have been referred to the Minister's Department if the county council had considered it to be in contravention of structure plan policy. They learnt recently, however, that the application for a judicial review was unsuccessful and that the county council was behaving lawfully in its decision to regard the application as a question of detail. It is as a result of that decision that I sought the Adjournment debate today.

The position in which local residents find themselves is that it is now proposed to allow a course of action that is quite out of proportion to that envisaged in 1952. It is inconceivable that when the original permission was granted by the now defunct local authority with the infilling condition, it envisaged hundreds of 32-tonne lorries trundling down our local lanes each week over five years. The size of vehicles, the scale of the operation and the disturbance involved was in no way contemplated.

At present, discussion and consultation is taking place between local authorities about the details of the site licence. Local residents are encouraged that efforts are being made to restrict the classes of refuse to be permitted. There had been great anxiety that household or commercial waste would be dumped in the quarry. It would be quite unacceptable in an area with houses in close proximity to risk any prospect of methane gas or contamination of the water supply. Limits are also being set on the amount of waste that can be tipped daily. Obviously that relates to the number of vehicles using our rural roads and the associated risk to travellers and pedestrians.

I have already emphasised that the quarry lies in an area of outstanding natural beauty. It is important to point out that the quarry itself is recognised by the Nature Conservancy Council, which has notified Stockstone quarry as an area of special scientific interest. It described the site in the following terms:

> "This quarry shows the finest available exposure of the Bargate Beds which are a distinct lithological sub-unit of the Lower Greensand Sandstone Beds in the north western weald. The quarry is also of great significance in providing the best field illustration of the phenomena associated with chert formation in the Bargate Beds — showing both the calcareous and cherty sandstone lithologies."

In short, any geologist would obtain an immense amount of information from this one site, which is the finest example of bargate in the region, with the added bonus of chertified stone.

Suggestions are being put forward in the area that the quarry might become a nature reserve, primarily for educational purposes. The size of the reserve would be sufficient to allow local schools to have small areas for biology projects — for example, to study colonisation and ecosystem development. Not too far from the site lies the Seale quarry, which is owned by Surrey county council but managed by the Surrey Trust for Nature Conservation.

It is widely recognised that planning decisions are sensitive and controversial, especially in areas like mine where there is potentially endless demand for development and housing, but where there is equally great demand— and, I would argue, a duty—to preserve the character of the environment for future generations. It has also become an accepted and expected principle of our lives that justice should not only be done, but be seen to be done.

I want the Minister to realise that the present arrangements for Stockstone quarry seem to allow no formal opportunity for local voices and opinions to be

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

heard. Even if the final decision were to go against local opinion, it would be easier to bear had there been a full and public inquiry at which all the arguments could have been put formally.

A number of proposals have been made. Perhaps there should be a time limit on planning permissions so that they would be officially reviewed once a certain period had expired. It will be recalled that we are discussing a permission granted 34 years ago. Alternatively, the restoration aspects of the permission could be subject to review.

It is also proposed that greater weight should be given to the local borough council in the oversight of mineral and waste disposal decisions. It is the district authority that has to live with those directly affected by those decisions. In short, I believe that the decision-making process affecting Stockstone quarry is hard to reconcile with our broad green belt and conservation policies. It lies far outside the bounds of common sense and natural justice, even if it lies within the law as it stands.

A licence issued as little more than a token gesture a generation and a half ago, to a disused village quarry that had last employed horse-and-cart technology before the 1939 war to provide building stone for the locality, has been hijacked to cover a large-scale operation of a wholly different kind, using technology unimaginable to the issuing rural district council — which itself ceased to exist 12 years ago.

This same licence is now being used — and some would say abused—to allow the deposit of 1·5 million cu m of rubbish in an entirely unsuitable and specially protected area. I ask the Minister to give this matter his full and urgent consideration and to review his green belt, environmental and planning policies in the light of this profoundly worrying case.

8.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I sincerely congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on raising this matter on the Adjournment, and also on the careful and concerned way in which she has presented a matter of considerable concern to her constituents. Indeed, we have come to expect such concern from her, and tonight has been no exception.

This matter was first raised with my Department in November of last year, when the proposals were being considered by the Waverley district council. Since then, there has been a large number of letters of objection to the proposals, and my hon. Friend has taken up the matter with my right hon. Friend on three occasions since November.

I and my right hon. Friend have every sympathy with the residents of the area for the position in which they now find themselves. However, my first concern must be to ensure that the planning system is operating properly and as laid down in the relevant legislation. My hon. Friend has given us a detailed account of the problems that have arisen at Stockstone quarry, but I need to highlight and amplify some of those to explain my Department's position.

The first point that must be made is that quarrying at the site started many years before the introduction of town and country planning legislation in 1947. As my hon. Friend has said, in those days it was a small-scale operation, perhaps involving no more than a couple of men. The size of the workings and the level of output would have been very small by modern standards. Planning control at the site really started with the 1952 permission granted by the former Hambledon rural district council. As my hon. Friend has pointed out, it was that permission which sowed the seeds of the problem which we are discussing this evening.

It is planning condition No. 4 which deals with the filling in and restoration of the quarry. It states:

"Excavations shall be filled in or surfaces covered with materials agreed to be suitable for plant growth by the local planning authority on consultation with the undertakers, Ministry of Agriculture and/or the Forestry Commission. The interval and stages at which the filling in or covering shall be carried out shall be agreed with the local planning authority."

Clearly, this condition offered the operator a choice in his approach to restoring the site. There is no doubt at all that a modern planning consent would have a far more rigorous condition for restoration. Indeed, it would probably contain a separate set of such conditions, but that does not invalidate in any way the legal standing of the condition that I have just read out. Public attitudes to mineral workings have changed enormously during the past 30 to 40 years, and that is reflected in much tighter control through the conditions attached to modern planning permissions. However, there is a legacy of old permissions. As those workings became exhausted, or as new permissions for extensions are used to consolidate earlier consents, the problems are diminishing. Nevertheless, it will be some years yet before the problems have disappeared completely.

My hon. Friend has asked whether planning permission for mineral workings should be reviewed from time to time. My Department is doing what it can to help in this regard. The Town and Country Planning Act (Commencement No. 3) Order 1986 will bring new provisions into force on 19 May. These include, under section 3, the requirement for mineral planning authorities periodically to review every site in their area where mineral working operations are being carried out. It requires them also to make such orders under section 45, 51, 51(A) or 51(B) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 as they consider appropriate.

The purpose of the review is to monitor all recently active sites or sites authorised but not yet started to ensure that conditions are consistent with current minerals planning practice. Of course, it is only the duty to review which is completely new under the recent commencement order. Local planning authorities already have powers under the 1971 Act to revoke or modify planning permissions but, in such circumstances, compensation would be payable and this could be considerable. It is for the local planning authority to judge whether this would be a right and proper course of action.

Next there is the question whether the proposals for infilling the site constitute a new application for planning permission. As my hon. Friend has told us, the case was recently the subject of a judicial review in the High Court. We have heard that the court ruled that the county council was acting correctly in treating the application as an approval of details pursuant to the 1952 planning permission. This therefore has a bearing on the powers of the Secretary of State.

Under section 35 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, my right hon. Friend is empowered to call in for his own determination applications for planning permission being considered by the local planning authority. But the important clause in this provision is "applications for planning permission". The High Court judgment has ruled against such an interpretation in the case of the infilling of Stockstone quarry. A large number of my hon. Friend's constituents have written to request the intervention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. But, even if he wished to do so, he has no appropriate powers at his disposal, because, as I said, the court ruled that it was not a new application for planning permission.

My hon. Friend referred to green belt policy. I suspect that the proposals have generated particularly strong objections because, as we have heard, the site is within both the green belt and the Surrey hills, of outstanding natural beauty. I sympathise entirely with the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend about this. On the green belt, it would perhaps be appropriate for me to set out, briefly, our present position.

It was a Conservative Government in 1955 who first introduced a comprehensive green belt policy. This Government have strongly reinforced that policy in the circular which we published in 1984. The overall aim is to develop and maintain a positive approach to land-use management which makes adequate provision for necessary development and ensures that the green belt serves its proper purpose. Planning is a matter of balancing the two interests—development and conservation. By ensuring that development takes place in the right place, both interests can often be served well.

On the specific question whether mineral workings should be permitted in the green belt, our policy is influenced by three factors. First, mineral extraction is a transient use of land. Secondly, proposals to work minerals within green belts should be considered on their merits, having regard to the provisions of the development plan, the general presumption against inappropriate development within green belts and any other material considerations. Thirdly, as minerals can be worked only where they occur, the need for the mineral when balanced against other considerations may justify extraction. Our policy on minerals extraction in areas of outstanding natural beauty is that any applications for substantial new workings or extensions to existing workings should be subject to the most rigorous examination. This may well include the consideration of alternative sources of the mineral which could be obtained from less environmentally sensitive areas.

However, it is a fact of geology that many of the mineral deposits that are of value to the extractive industry occur in some of the more beautiful parts of the countryside. The Surrey hills AONB is no exception. That is well known. I understand that the elevation of the ground in this area owes itself in part to the underlying sandstones and limestones known collectively to geologists as the lower greensand. Of course, the problem in this case is that the assessment whether quarrying and subsequent infilling should take place at this locality has already been made. Indeed, it was made prior to the designation of the Surrey green belt and the Surrey hills AONB.

It has been suggested in correspondence to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that Stockstone quarry is of national scientific importance. My hon. Friend has raised the matter again this evening. We have heard that the quarry face shows particular sedimentary features of interest. The Nature Conservancy Council may be seeking the designation of the quarry face as a geological site of special scientific interest. If the site does display unique features, I can well understand the NCC's intentions. But we cannot overlook the fact that a valid planning consent exists which gives the operator the option of filling in the quarry. The designation of the site as an SSSI, even if it were to go ahead, cannot therefore give the site any protection in this regard.

I am sorry if my comments sound rather negative and unhelpful but, as I hope I have made clear, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no powers to call in this matter for his determination. I should now like to consider the specific question of the infilling operation. It would be quite wrong to assume that the local authority has no powers at its disposal here.

Any person who intends to use a site for the disposal of controlled waste under the terms of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 requires a waste disposal licence. This will be given only if a valid planning permission exists under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. It has already been established that a valid permission is in operation. Surrey county council is the licensing authority and has a duty not to reject the application unless it is satisfied that its rejection is necessary for the purpose of preventing pollution of water or danger to public health.

Before a licence can be issued in this case, Surrey county council must consult, among others, the appropriate water authority. It must then agree conditions which may relate to such matters as the duration of the licence, the kinds and quantities of waste which may be dealt with and the hours of operation. The consideration of the conditions would, of course, take into account also such matters as the risk of polluting the underlying water table.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not have any powers to call in a licence application for his own determination, but if the water authority requests that the licence should not be issued or disagrees with the county council about the conditions, either of them may refer the matter to my right hon. Friend. Similarly, if the licence application is rejected or if the company were to disagree with the conditions, it can appeal. It is conceivable, therefore, that the case might come before my right hon. Friend, but I must stress that he could not reassess the validity of the condition permitting filling at the quarry. The only matters that could be considered would relate to the nature of the waste disposal licence.

From the correspondence that my Department has received, some of my hon. Friend's constituents have particular concerns about the prospects of Stockstone quarry becoming a dump for some of London's household refuse. As I have said, the type of waste that could be disposed of at the site is a matter to be covered by the site licence, but I understand that the applicants have excluded household waste from their list of infilling materials. I have no doubt at all that the county council's officials and the water authority have been looking critically at the proposals. I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand that it would be quite wrong of me to speculate on the conditions that the county council might attach to the site licence, but the Control of Pollution Act 1974 confers quite wide powers as to what might be covered.

[Mr. Richard Tracey]

My hon. Friend has expressed understandable concern about the traffic implications. Traffic generated by quarrying and the infilling of quarries is, of course, a frequent source of local concern about which we hear regularly in many parts of the country. This is especially true when it involves the use of minor roads in rural areas. I have no specific information on the frequency of traffic movements which might arise in the case of the filling of Stockstone quarry, but I would expect the site licence to set a limit on the number of tonnes of waste which might be tipped at the site in any period and that will, of course, have the knock-on effect of limiting the traffic volume. Once again, that is a matter for the local authority to consider.

Clearly, planning permission for the filling operation has to be judged to exist and it would therefore be quite wrong unreasonably to prevent the access of appropriate vehicles to the site. I have little doubt that the county council will endeavour to strike the best possible balance in this regard. Indeed, it would perhaps be appropriate to reflect upon the local authority's position in the case of Stockstone quarry. In their letters to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, some of my hon. Friend's constituents have expressed a considerable sense of frustration about Surrey county council's handling of this matter. We should not under-estimate the difficulties that this case has created for the council's members and officials. I am sure that those responsible for drafting the 1952 planning consent had no conception of the problems that were being created for their successors in title.

Finally, let me say that I fully recognise my hon. Friend's concern in this matter and the deeply felt anxiety of her constituents. I hope that I have explained the position as far as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is concerned. We must hope that discussions in relation to the licence allay some of the fears that have been expressed in my hon. Friend's excellent exposition of the worries of her constituents.

Housing (Burnley)

9.8 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I welcome this rare opportunity for a second Adjournment debate because it does not happen often. I appreciate that, in view of the shortness of notice, the Minister will have some difficulty in replying to some of the specific points I raise. I shall not criticise him for that, but I hope that he will try to respond to some of my general comments and I hope that he will take on board the more specific points and come back to me with some of the answers. I think that that is the normal method for a second Adjournment debate, because they are always arranged at short notice and it puts the Minister, whoever it is, in some difficulty. I recognise that, although the Minister is from the Department of the Environment, this matter is not within his area of responsibility.

The subject of housing, especially in Burnley, is important and it is right that I should take this opportunity to draw it to the attention of the House. This is certainly not the first occasion on which I have had an Adjournment debate on the subject and it is far from the first occasion on which I have spoken about the housing problems in my constituency of Burnley.

I think that it is true to say that housing in Burnley is the second most serious problem after unemployment. It is a matter of grave concern to the people of the town, in both the private and public housing sectors. One of the great differences between the two main political parties is on housing policy. We believe that the Government should make available many more resources to deal with housing in places such as Burnley. Not only would that deal with the housing problem, which is a common feature in Burnley and many other areas, but it would enable people to be put back to work.

My main criticism hinges on the provision of resources. It is apparent that the present housing investment programme allocations to local authorities are inadequate. The second aspect connected with cash and the ability of local authorities to deal with their housing problems relates to the use of capital receipts from the sale of council houses. It seems wrong to me and to many people in local government that local authorities are restricted to using 20 per cent. of capital receipts. The Government should look again at that policy. I hope that they will do so with a view to increasing the percentage that can be spent, if not making it possible to spend all the capital receipts.

A housing crisis is rapidly dawning in the constituency that I represent. There is a problem in many areas. First, we still have a large number of pre-war council houses —864, which is about 10 per cent. of our housing stock awaiting improvement. Those houses urgently need modernisation. The council estimates that it will take about eight and a half years at the present rate of progress to modernise them. The present cost is £15,000 to £16,000 per dwelling, and there is no subsidy for the improvement of council houses in the main.

The total cost to the council at 1986 prices is about £14 million. If the Government turned round and said tomorrow that they would give Burnley an extra allocation of £14 million, and if one assumed that the labour was available to deal with that programme, there would be implications for the housing revenue account, which would have to be met by an increase in either rent or rates.

That burden would be unacceptable. I have long been of the view that we should look differently at the way in which we subsidise improvements. It is time that we considered subsidising improvements to council houses in the same way as we subsidise improvements to houses in the private sector.

As I said, at the present rate of progress we shall have completed those improvements in eight and a half years' time. If one takes the pessimistic view that that cannot be improved on, at that time the council will also be faced with the problem of having to improve houses built immediately after the war. At the stage, those houses will be 50 years old. Improvements such as central heating are missing from houses built in the immediate post-war years. We have several estates in that category. But the immediate priority is to deal with the pre-war council houses.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pike: In a moment.

There are such houses on the Stoops estate in Burnley, but the council has had to divert resources to other estates in the town. In one part—Naples avenue—people are gravely concerned about the council's inability to modernise those houses. Hargher Clough is another pre-war estate, as are Barden Casterton Avenue, Old Palace House and Bleak House estates. Bleak House estate is in the ward that I represented and the council was forced to sell 112 houses to Wimpey's. The council recognised that it would be unable to deal with the problems on that estate because of the Government's policies.

Mr. Marlow: This is a very important debate not just for the hon. Gentleman but for many other right hon. and hon. Members with constituencies that face similar problems. The hon. Gentleman referred to the need for council houses to be modernised and repaired. Is he able to say to what extent the work is done by the council's work force and to what extent outsiders are brought in to deal with it? Is he able to compare the cost?

Mr. Pike: The council puts all this work out to tender. It depends upon who wins the tender. Wimpey has done the work in a number of cases and the direct labour organisation has done the work in other cases. A number of other builders have also been involved. One builder who carried out the work on a section of the Stoops estate made a very poor job of it. On the other hand, Wimpey does as good a job as the council's direct labour organisation. There is little to choose between the two.

I turn to another important aspect — the need to improve the older housing stock in the private sector. Burnley has a large number of pre-1914 terrace houses. They are mainly stone-built houses, of the traditional type. It will take the council 10 years to deal with the backlog of discretionary grant applications that are in the pipeline. In March 1984 the council had to stop accepting applications for improvement and repair grants. Its decision followed the Government's announcement in the autumn of 1983 of their changed policy on grants after the general election in June 1983. In order to provide the grants that are in the pipeline, the council would need to find £13 million, which is a considerable amount of money. This year the council has allocated £2 million for improvement grants.

The council has introduced a points system. Points are allocated according to hardship, the type of area and many other factors. Nobody argues that the points system is fair or perfect. The council tries to be as fair as possible, but it is difficult to get the points system exactly right. The council has tried to operate as fair a points system as possible, but it recognises that there are problems.

The council has also given prior approval for immediate, urgent work to be done in individual cases. I refer to applications for work to be done to deal with dry rot and other similarly urgent work. If such work were not dealt with immediately, problems would be caused that would go beyond the point where improvement or repair work could be carried out. If prior approval is given, people receive additional points. However, some of those who received prior approval for work that may have been done as long as two years ago are now coming under increasing pressure to pay the builders who carried out the work.

Not everybody is in a position to borrow money from a building society or a bank. One of my constituents is under considerable pressure from the building contractor and his bank arising from work that was done with prior approval. Another of my constituents served in the armed forces. He and his wife bought a house in Burnley. They have had to sell all their jewellery and virtually all of their possessions to pay for work that had been done after prior approval was granted.

It is a matter of regret to me that money is available only to allow the council to accept new applications for intermediate grants. I hope that the Government will provide sufficient money to enable the council to deal with the backlog of applications for discretionary grants and also to accept once again new applications for improvement and repair grants. I have to stress the important factor that if one house is not repaired and is allowed to become derelict, because of the way that the houses are built in my constituency, that can mean the demolition of the whole terrace. In turn, that means new build to replace those houses, which is far more costly than repair.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): It sounds as though some of the housing problems in the hon. Gentleman's constituency are not dissimilar from those in other urban constituencies such as mine. Has the hon. Gentleman put any pressure on his local authority to improve housing in Burnley by selling more council houses? He will be aware that the financial benefits that accrue from the sale of council houses do much to ease some of the financial problems in housing, apart from the substantial other benefits such as giving people the satisfaction and pleasure of owning their own property. It is, as the hon. Gentleman must agree, one of the Government's achievements, which I believe now has the support of the Labour party.

Mr. Pike: I have never been opposed to individuals being able to buy their own houses, but in the course of such a brief debate, I do not wish to embark on a discussion about the sale of council houses. I made it clear in my opening remarks that the problems to which I was referring were not by any means unique to Burnley. However, they are a result of the Government's policies and I ask the Government to consider how to solve them.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said that the sale of council houses would assist

[Mr. Pike]

our housing problems. Burnley has sold a considerable number of its council houses, and there might be more merit in the hon. and learned Gentleman's point if the Government were to allow councils to spend more than the 20 per cent. of capital receipts that they are allowed to spend. The criticism about the sale of council houses is that councils are not allowed to spend the money as they would wish.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman probably knows, and if he does not it might help him, that not only is his council entitled to spend a percentage of accumulated resources from the sale of council houses but, in the year in question, it can spend a percentage of the receipts of that year. This seems to be a great incentive to Burnley to get to work and sell as many council houses as it can, given the great benefits of home ownership to the people who buy those houses, and also giving a further profit to the local authority so that it can do many of the things that he wishes it to do, and that we wish to see done as well.

Mr. Pike: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's point that councils are able to use receipts in that way. I am trying to point out that I believe that the Government should put no restriction on the way in which councils can use capital receipts from assets. The Government's argument that the PSBR could be affected if all capital receipts are used are wrong, and the Government would have a much stronger argument in pushing their case for the sale of council houses if they were to remove that restriction.

In Burnley, we have sold about 1,000 council houses out of a stock of 8,000, but a large number of other people living in council houses are unable to buy them because they do not have sufficient resources, as they are unemployed, or for some other reason. It is no good advocating the sale of council houses if people cannot buy. If a person can afford to buy, it would be silly not to let them do so. I have never argued that. I lived in a council house for some time, but then bought one of my own and I believe that people have the right to own their property.

My constituency has a high percentage of owner-occupied property. It has one of the highest percentages in the country, and many council tenants who could afford to do so have bought their homes. If more people were employed, many more would wish to buy their homes.

The sale of council houses is not the issue that I wished to pursue tonight, but it would warrant a full debate in its own right. I was discussing private sector housing, not council housing. When I was leader of Burnley borough council, we prepared a rolling programme for housing action areas. It was the council's intention to introduce housing action areas to enable owners to preserve and restore basically sound terraced properties and extend their lives. The council has been unable to do that because of the Government's failure to make adequate moneys available. Such a programme of action is extremely important in a town where there is such a high percentage of older housing in the private sector.

I urge the Government to reconsider the subsidy for the improvement for sale scheme. House prices are very low in the Burnley area, and that creates a problem with rents because people can buy so cheaply. The council has not sold at a profit any of the houses that it has improved under the improvement for sale scheme and is never likely to do so. When the scheme was introduced, the subsidies to housing associations were the same as those to local authorities. If there was a good enough case for similar subsidies then, the case should apply now.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman said that it has not been possible to make a profit on improvement for sale properties because of the level of house prices in his constituency. Does that not depend on the price put on the house before improvement? If the council put the house on the open market, the price might be different from the value of the house on the council's books. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the loan charges have to be paid——

Mr. Deputy Speaker Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Briefly, please.

Mr. Marlow: Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The loan charges have to be paid, and that is water under the bridge.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Enough of this water under the bridge.

Mr. Pike: I note your remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have tried to give way as little as possible.

The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is wrong, because the properties will have low values in the first instance. In some areas of Burnley, an improved pre-1914 terraced house will fetch between £12,000 and £14,000. Most of the council houses for sale have been valued at between £12,000 and £14,000, and with the discounts provided they have been sold for well below the asking price. The cost of bringing a pre-1914 house to a proper standard with a flush toilet, bathroom and other modern amenities in many cases exceeds the price which the house would fetch when sold. The council loses money, even allowing for the susidy.

It is important that the council should pursue the scheme because, as I said earlier, if it does not improve those houses dereliction can spread along a terrace of houses, destroying them. At the end of the day it will cost the local authority and Government far more to deal with the problem.

Why are the Government reviewing the slum-clearance subsidy? Perhaps the Minister will be able to enlighten me on the motive behind that.

Sheltered housing is an important area and it is the only one in which Burnley council is pursuing a policy of new build. There is no case for new build for general use in Burnley but the demand for sheltered housing is substantial and the council is trying to meet that demand in two ways. First, it is converting existing properties, and, secondly, there is new purpose-built sheltered housing. But again, because of insufficient resources, the council is unable to meet that large and justified demand.

Indeed, the council has now embarked on a central control system, which I welcome because it means that those in sheltered accommodation can have cover 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for 52 weeks a year, which is essential. It will also provide an opportunity at a later date to provide installations in individual homes, whether in council homes or in homes in the private sector, to give elderly people the type of back-up to which most hon. Members will believe they are entitled in their old age.

I welcome that move, but the council needs to provide more purpose-built sheltered accommodation to deal with

the problem. Every year the council is faced with the difficulty of trying to balance what should be put in its programme. Should it build purpose-built sheltered accommodation? Should money go to the private sector or to the improvement of council houses? The simple fact is that, without sufficient resources in the housing investment programme allocation, without being able to use all the capital receipts, there will be insufficient money to deal with all the problems that exist.

As I said in opening, this is a major issue; the second most important issue after unemployment in Burnley. I accept that, as other hon. Members have said, this is an important issue in many other areas. I urge the Government to think seriously about the provision of money for housing throughout Britain and in Burnley in particular to deal with that important problem to ensure that people, whether they be elderly, or whether they want private or council accommodation, have decent homes in which to live. If they were to make resources available to deal with this important problem they would, at the same time, help to reduce the present unacceptable level of unemployment.

9.33 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): This is not the first occasion on which I have taken an interest in the housing problems of Burnley. As the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) knows, I contributed an article on housing in north-east Lancashire to *Contract Journal* last year. I have at least some common ground with him in identifying the problems of his area.

I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his good fortune in securing this debate, and, for some reason, securing the presence of the leader of the Liberal party. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman's seat has now been identified as a potential alliance target at the next general election. I notice that the leader of the Liberal party has now gone. That may relate to the falling strength of the alliance in the polls, and, therefore, the relative safety of the hon. Gentleman's seat. The distinctive features of north-east Lancashire are its high level of owner-occupation and its elderly housing stock. That creates a backlog of improvements and problems financing them.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will forgive me for saying that some of the ideas in the Green Paper on housing improvement grants do not take full account of regional variations. In my constituency in the south-east, for example, improvement grants serve simply to increase the value of the unimproved property and tend to go to people who would spend money improving them anyway. In north-east Lancashire, however, the value of an improved house might well be less than the total of the money received in improvement grant and the original value. The prospect of having to repay a grant, as the Green Paper contemplates, is therefore a disincentive, and I hope that my hon. Friend will take account of that.

The hon. Member for Burnley may be encouraged to learn what has happened as a result of selling unimproved council houses to Wimpey. An amendment which I made to the Housing and Planning Bill will allow councils to pay improvement grants for the common parts of flats. That will encourage local authorities to seek renovation schemes involving the private sector in a difficult part of the housing market.

The differential between house prices in north-east Lancashire and other parts of the country creates a difficulty, as home owners might not be confident that they can afford to move on. The market in Burnley is not as strong as in other parts of the country, and it is difficult to encourage people to buy if they feel that they might have to move to take a job in another part of the country and that they will not be able to sell. There is, therefore, some scope for local authorities to run one of the successful in-buying schemes which are operated in some parts of the country, which enable people to sell to the local authority.

One of north-east Lancashire's problems is its aging population and their different housing requirements. Some need sheltered housing and others want to stay in their own homes but are incapable of looking after themselves properly.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) spoke of subsidising improvements in Burnley. If that policy were carried through, the subsidies would have to be paid for by ratepayers in other parts of the country, notably those whom my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) and I represent. Is that not incredibly unfair on our constituents?

Mr. Jones: A more serious problem is the fact that subsidising public sector housing will depress the price of private sector houses, as there will be less demand for them. It would therefore exacerbate the problems of first-time buyers moving to new estates.

In my constituency, Honeywell has piloted a computer-operated scheme based on the Piper-Warden scheme, but a more sophisticated version. It provides essential monitoring of elderly people in both public sector housing and many private sector houses in places such as Burnley where elderly widows live alone. Although it is a friendly area and neighbours look in, some people who wish to remain in their homes are unable to look after themselves. I commend that scheme to the hon. Member for Burnley and his council, with which he has close contact.

Mr. Pike: If the hon. Gentleman looks at my speech, he will see that I said that Burnley had introduced a central control system which would be extended to individual homes in private and public sector housing. Therefore, Burnley council intends to do exactly what he is suggesting.

Mr. Jones: My recollection is that that is based on the Piper system. The computerised system is more sophisticated and will cover a wider area. The hon. Gentleman is in close touch with the council, as a former leader of it, and I hope that he will pass on that information. I should be pleased to arrange any necessary meetings with Honeywell, if that would be helpful.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman touched on the point about the true percentage of capital receipts. I know that that subject worries hon. Members on both sides of the House. When in the recent past we have seen rising interest rates it has been difficult to justify a measure which could remove £5,500 billion from the money market overnight, or from local authority internal lending, with its concomitant pressure on interest rates. There are two sides to that issue. It is not as simple as the hon. Gentleman maintains.

9.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): It is only right to

[Mr. Richard Tracey]

start by paying tribute to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) who grasps opportunities with both hands and speaks on behalf of his constituents. I must apologise to him for the fact that housing Ministers in the Department of the Environment have unavoidable engagements tonight. He may have grasped the opportunity, but, unfortunately, they cannot be present to answer the precise details of his speech. I undertake to have the correct information supplied to him by letter after we have read his speech. I shall ensure that my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction considers the points carefully.

I shall answer some points and take the opportunity to put forward some general details about the Government's attitude towards housing and to set out some of our housing policy once again. The Government have an excellent record on housing. It would be wrong for anybody to run away with the idea that the Government minimise the extent of housing problems, with the creation of many of which the Government had nothing to do.

Certainly, we have set out to find out the facts about the housing stock. First, we did so through the housing stock condition inquiry last year, which was the first of its type. In the inquiry local authorities provided information about renovation needs in their housing stock. Secondly, we are doing so through the English house condition survey later this year, which will be the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken. We shall cover both private and public sector housing.

Because of the scale of the problem, the resources and skills of the private sector as well as the public sector must be fully harnessed. Of the expenditure of £9,000 million a year on renovation in the private sector, 90 per cent. is provided by the private sector itself, but the Government have provided large-scale assistance, amounting to over £3,000 million, in home improvement grants. That £3,000 million has to be compared with a mere £90 million in the last year of the Labour Government.

In a Green Paper last year the Government set out proposals for targeting Government assistance where it is most needed. There were numerous responses to the Green Paper, and my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction and colleagues in the Department are now considering those responses before making decisions on the future thrust of our policy.

We have also provided extra assistance to local authorities—an increase of £200 million in their planned level of capital expenditure on housing in 1986-87. But with local authority housing, too, we believe that full use must be made of the private sector and other innovative approaches.

The hon. Gentleman has concentrated on Burnley. I am aware that in Burnley the Bleak House estate has been successfully renovated for re-sale by the building company, Wimpey. Other private developers are interested in undertaking schemes of this kind, and the local authority, as the hon. Gentleman will know, is in touch with my Department's urban housing renewal unit. I hope that it will be successful in an application for extra housing investment programme allocation to renovate one or more of the other estates.

Two essential elements in the UHRU approach are, firstly, decentralising the local authority's management so that it is more effective, more responsive to and in closer touch with the tenants whom it sets out to serve and, secondly, involving people directly in the renovation of their own estates, especially through community refurbishment schemes, in which funds from the Manpower Services Commission and my Department enable unemployed people to be employed on improving their own environment. A number of such schemes have now been approved, and I hope that Burnley will follow suit.

Mr. Michael McGuire (Makerfield): Could the Minister tell me what use his Department is making of a unit, which I think is privately sponsored, known as the land resource unit? I believe that it has carried out studies and surveys on two estates in inner London, both of them, I think, in Hackney. One estate has been renovated to the extent that everyone has his own front door and patch of garden. It means getting away from the tower block mentality. The incredible thing is that there has been not one burglary on one of those inner London council estates this year. The other estate, which has been left largely untouched, has all the problems that we have come to associate with tower blocks. That was done by this land resource unit, which is worldwide. The author of the report was speaking on the radio. That is how I happened to hear her. I thought it was so interesting that it would be appropriate to ask the Minister about it while he was on his feet.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The debate is about Burnley.

Mr. Tracey: As you rightly point out, Mr. Speaker, the debate relates specifically to Burnley.

I apologise to the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) for not being briefed on that point. He has raised a matter of considerable interest. Just as I undertook to write to the hon. Member for Burnley, so I shall refer the point made by the hon. Member for Makerfield to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, and we shall make sure that the hon. Gentleman gets an answer.

Mr. McGuire: It was on the "Woman's Hour" programme on Tuesday afternoon.

Mr. Tracey: I have been led to the right source.

The Government have achieved a great deal since May 1979. In Great Britain 1·25 million new homes have been built. On a very important part of our policy, 870,000 houses and flats, although perhaps not as many flats as we would wish, have been sold by local authorities, new towns and housing associations in Britain; 800,000 of those sales were to sitting tenants. Sales are still at about 100,000 a year. Great Britain is the only country in western Europe with such an enormous public housing sector—27 per cent. of total housing. That is a legacy of many years of municipal socialism in housing.

The right-to-buy has been successful because it has recognised the wishes of the great majority of the people to own their own homes. Nearly 1 million families have bought their flats or houses from councils, new towns and housing associations. Owner-occupation has grown by 2 million. Nearly two thirds of British families now own their homes. That is their choice and they have had the essential freedom to exercise that choice. We are also proud that mortgage famines have disappeared. Mortgage rates are coming down, with the third significant reduction in a matter of weeks.

The policy of the Government is more choice, more freedom and more fairness in the rented sector as well. That is the best way to avoid the mistakes of the past. Council tenants did not have much choice in the design of the tower blocks that were built in the 1960s and the 1970s. Those designs reflected what bureaucrats and architects in central and local government thought was best for tenants. Unfortunately, the people were not consulted. The result has been many of the housing problems which we have today.

I regret that the management record of many local authorities has not made the resolution of the problems easier. There are 116,000 houses and flats standing empty —more than the total number of families accepted as homeless last year. Of those, 26,000 houses and flats have been empty for more than 12 months. That record is not acceptable. Rent arrears now total nearly £200 million. In the worst 20 authorities, arrears amount to £94 million.

We hear a great deal from Labour authorities about the need for more money to spend on their housing stock. We have heard about that from the hon. Member for Burnley tonight. We must ask some serious questions about it. If the housing stock is in poor repair, why did those authorities allow it to get into that state? What have they been doing for the past 40 years? The record of many councils which complain in that way is poor, but they cannot be held entirely to blame. Many council housing departments are simply too big—too much like monsters —to manage their housing properly.

We have to find ways to break up those great empires, to achieve more diversity of management and ownership and to encourage more tenant participation in the organisation and management of estates and blocks.

I am proud to say that the Housing and Planning Bill will promote such a change. I welcome the enlightened attitude which all the Opposition parties represented on the Committee adopted towards the Bill.

I am pleased that we have had a positive response from most local authorities, including Labour authorities, to the UHRU operation. Over 100 authorities have asked for visits and more than 120 schemes have already been worked out. The schemes vary greatly. Some lever in private funds and others do not, but the essential element is to persuade managers to respond to the needs of tenants, not to the needs of the bureaucratic or political machine.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The trouble is that many local authorities have used direct labour for housing maintenance for years and have therefore been geared to the convenience of the work force and managers in those departments instead of the convenience of customers.

Mr. Tracey: In his usual thrusting way, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) goes to the heart of the matter. I do not attempt to deny what he says. He makes an apposite point.

The authorities recognise that they do not have all the answers. We have to examine new ways of providing rented housing. The private sector has a part to play, as do housing associations, management trusts and tenant co-operatives. Not only can such alternatives offer tenants the prospect of better management, but they offer more choice, more freedom and more fairness. That is what this Government are all about.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wondered what the position was. I hope that the matter on which you are about to rule is not pre-empted because of the anxiety of my hon. Friend the Minister to sit down three minutes before 10 o'clock. If there is no problem, I shall resume my seat.

Mr. Speaker: There never was a problem.

Mr. Speaker's Ruling (House of Commons Crest)

9.58 pm

Mr. Speaker: Earlier this afternoon the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) drew attention, on a point of order, to an alleged misuse of House stationery, in that a circular letter bearing the crowned portcullis had been sent out by the Leader of the Liberal party as a contribution to the current by-election campaigns. I undertook to examine any evidence which the hon. Member could produce in support of the allegation.

I have now looked at the letters in question and I find that they are headed not by a crowned portcullis, but by a version of the Royal Arms which was used for House of Commons stationery until recently, and associated with the words "House of Commons".

The regulations governing the use of House of Commons stationery make it quite clear that this stationery must not be used

"in connection with . . . the return of any person to public office."

The application of these rules, which are approved by myself on the recommendations of the Services Committee, must, as the rules themselves say, rest on the good sense of individual Members. In this instance, I have to find that there has been a technical breach of the rules which no interpretation can gainsay. Does the right hon. Member, the Leader of the Liberal party, wish to say something?

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I first express my surprise that, contrary to the well-established courtesies of this House, I was given no notice that this matter was to be raised on a point of order this afternoon, and again early this evening—*[Interruption.]* It is true.

Contrary to what I understand has been asserted, no House of Commons stationery has been used for the letter circulated to electors yesterday. It has been printed and accounted for as a normal election leaflet.

On the matter of the emblem printed in the top left-hand corner of the leaflet, I took advice before agreeing to that, as I was well aware that it was not permitted to reproduce our current portcullis letter heading. I regret the technical breach of our rules that has occurred as a result of that, and I shall ensure that it is not repeated.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I regret that it was impossible to warn the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) about my point of order, as I believe that he was not present in the House at the time. I have spoken to him subsequently and he told me that he did not mind anyway, so why he raises that matter on the Floor of the House mystifies me.

The right hon. Gentleman also said, and it is important, that there was an assertion that House of Commons stationery was being used. Nobody said that. The point of order that was raised, as the right hon. Gentleman can read in *Hansard* tomorrow, was about the use of the logo. You have ruled on that Mr. Speaker, and we are supremely grateful.

There is a great problem with our elections. The transatlantic habit of hyping elections is becoming increasingly prevalent in the United Kingdom. We are used to the abuse of statistics in particular canvass returns.

We are grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for preserving the rights and privileges of this House. Those who seek to join this House and to produce the rules of the country in which we live, should abide by the rules of this House. We are grateful.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I listened very carefully to your ruling. I was in the House earlier today when my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) raised the matter. In fact, it has been raised twice today.

I must ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether you consider the explanation given by the Leader of the Liberal party to be adequate as an apology to the House for what is clearly a gross abuse of the House.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): It is a flagrant abuse of the House.

Mr. Winterton: I say with all sincerity that I am not trying to score points off the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steele). However, there is clearly on a piece of paper the words "House of Commons", together with the old logo of the House of Commons which is still available to hon. Members——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already dealt with that matter. The hon. Gentleman need not protest about the use of that.

I can clearly answer the hon. Gentleman's initial question. I think that what was said by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale was entirely appropriate. He has apologised for the technical breach of the rules governing stationery.

Mr. Winterton: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I suggest that the words that I heard from the Leader of the Liberal party constituted a grudging apology, if it can even be considered an apology?

Will you, Mr. Speaker, give guidance to all Members of this House that in no circumstances, on any future occasion, is the logo of the House of Commons to be used in the build-up either to a general election or to a by-election, and that if it happens you will take the appropriate steps?

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that it might well be that, because of the political climate in this country at the present, that particular circular might have an important effect on the outcome of a by-election. If that is the case, it will be a grotesque abuse of this place and of our democratic principles.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one point of order at a time.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Can I ask you a simple question, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I shall deal with one point of order at a time.

I do not think that it will be an enormous revelation to the electors of West Derbyshire that the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale is a Member of the House of Commons. I do not think that what he has done will have any effect upon the by-election.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: On a point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already ruled on the use of the stationery. I do not need to say any more about that.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): On a point of order——

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): May I make a serious point of order, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: No, I shall first take the point of order of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence).

Mr. Lawrence: I am most grateful, Mr. Speaker. You dealt with the question of the abuse of the House by the use of the logo. Can you deal also with the question of the dignity of the House, which you are here to protect? I know that you do so with great care. The matter arises because of the text which is associated with the logo. The words are so absurd and fatuous that the effect of having the logo on the letter is to hold the House of Commons up to disrepute. May I refer you to some of the words?

Mr. Speaker: No, I shall not allow the hon. and learned Member to do so. If he is alleging that there is anything in the letter which is a breach of privilege, he must raise the matter in the usual way. I do not think that we should deal with the contents of a letter. I am only concerned with the use of the logo. I am not concerned with what is in the letter.

Mr. Lawrence: I am extremely grateful, Mr. Speaker. May I use this opportunity to correct what may be a profound disservice which I have done to the Leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel)?. It was not my fault, but when I raised the matter last I was cut off in mid-sentence by Mr. Deputy Speaker Armstrong. It is only fair to the House and to the Leader of the Liberal party to complete the sentence.

I made the point that the text was so ridiculous as to bring the House of Commons into disrepute by the use of the logo. *Hansard* has recorded that the text which is associated with the logo of the House of Commons states:

"We have reached a crucial point in our history in Britain. Are we going to pull ourselves".

It was at that moment that I was cut off, and that is how *Hansard* reads. However ludicrous the letter, I am sure that it was not that ludicrous. Perhaps I can complete that sentence so that I do no disservice to the Leader of the Liberal party. The sentence was:

"Are we going to pull ourselves together and face the future with confidence?"

As I have said before, it was a sentence so banal as to bring the reputation of the House into disrepute. I call upon you, Mr. Speaker, to make some observation about that reputation, because you are here to protect the interests of hon. Members and of Back Benchers in particular.

Mr. Bowen Wells: I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the statement by the Leader of the Liberal party that he had taken serious advice before using the House of Commons logo — admittedly, the old-fashioned logo. The right hon. Gentleman took advice and deliberately used the logo, in a calculated way, to influence the electors to whom he was writing. That is not a technical breach; it is a deliberate act by the Liberal party to use the right hon. Gentleman's position in the House to influence the electors of West Derbyshire.

Mr. Speaker: I think that I can deal with the matter. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale did not take advice from me, so I can only assume that the advice he took turned out to be incorrect.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that we need——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: But, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Well, if it is a serious contribution——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Perish the thought that it should not be a serious point, Mr. Speaker. You gave an excellent ruling, Sir, for which we are, as ever, eternally grateful, but you did not say what the outcome should be. The letter contained the words "The right hon. David Steel MP", not "the Leader of the Liberal party". The implication was that the words "The right hon. David Steel MP" added a greater emphasis to being a distinguished Member of the House.

What will be your ruling, Mr. Speaker? Should the letter be withdrawn so that there is never any taint on the reputation of the House? I know that the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) did not want to take unfair advantage, but the letter should be withdrawn. Will the "right honourable MP" send his people around to get the letter out of the feeble grasp of those people, or will you, Mr. Speaker, let this grave injustice go unheard and unchanged?

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it going to be helpful?

Mr. Penhaligon: All hon. Members are of course aware that, the moment a Member reaches the Chair, he readhes a point of absolute political neutrality. I am sure that we would all pay due homage to you for having achieved that, Mr. Speaker. Will you draw your own conclusions from the past 15 or 20 minutes and discover whether Ladbroke or William Hill is still open and apply a pound in the right direction, because I am sure that you would make money?

Mr. Speaker: I shall not be tempted. May I just say to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) that the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) is a right honourable Member. He has every right to use that high and honourable title.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 8 May 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

HARROGATE BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL [*Lords*]
Read a Second time, and committed.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 15 May.

MILFORD HAVEN PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [18 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday 15 May.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [24 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday 15 May.

HARWICH PARKESTON QUAY BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [28 April], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday 15 May.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Incomes

2. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current trend in levels of income in the agricultural sector.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): Farming income fell by 43 per cent. in 1985 compared with 1984, when it rose by 35 per cent. compared with 1983. The weather plays a large part in these figures. However, the price fixing will help our producers to sustain returns overall. Our industry, which is in surplus, faces difficult adjustments at this time.

Mr. Kennedy: Does the Minister accept that the underlying trend in these figures is downward and ever more downward? Given the essential importance of agriculture and the agriculture-related sectors in rural areas such as the Highlands of Scotland, but particularly in two other parliamentary constituencies that I can think of today, what will the Minister do to arrrest the underlying essential trend, which I fear will lead in the Highlands to another form of Highland clearance if nothing is done to reverse the trend?

Mr. Jopling: The Government share the hon. Gentleman's anxiety about agriculture and its economic prospects. The hon. Gentleman, typically for his party, is very good at stating the problems, but is short on providing solutions to them. The alliance is very good at claiming that incomes are going down, but it is very bad at telling us how it would deal with huge surpluses such as exist in agriculture. In relation to the hon. Gentleman's points about the Highlands, I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman, who I know has a degree of generosity, might draw attention to the considerable improvements that we made last year in the subsidies for less-favoured areas.

Mr. Marland: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is the height of hypocrisy for Members of Opposition parties to lament the drop in farmers' incomes when they are planning to rate agricultural land?

Mr. Jopling: We all know that. My hon. Friend should not accuse the hon Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) of that, as it is only the urban Members of those parties who tell us that they will rate agricultural land. The rural Members are understandably rather quiet about it.

Dr. Godman: Given the importance of beet and beet sugar to agriculture, is it not right and proper that any bid, from whatever source, for the acquisition of the British Sugar Corporation should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

Mr. Jopling: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that these are matters not for me but for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I shall ensure that my right hon. Friend's attention is drawn to the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Will not the Government's record on lowering interest rates and inflation, together with the

reduction in the cost of commodities that farmers buy, have a marked effect in helping to sustain farmers' net incomes?

Mr. Jopling: That is true, although I think that my hon. Friend has probably left out of his accurate list the fact that the changes in the green pound will also greatly help farmers.

Mr. John: As the right hon. Gentleman wants to be specific in his solutions, is this not the last year in which delays should be experienced in the compensatory allowance payments? Does he accept that some hill farmers are still awaiting their payments, and that that is quite unprecedented? Will he remedy the situation?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman should know that we are making every effort to make the payments as quickly as possible. He will also remember that earlier in the year we took the trouble to ensure that advance payments were made, particularly to some in the less-favoured areas. That, of course, was very welcome.

Statutory Services (Charges)

3. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated revenue for 1986-87 from charges to farmers for statutory services; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Peggy Fenner): Estimated receipts for all activities of my Department are published in the Supply Estimates 1986-87, class IV, but our data do not distinguish receipts from charges to farmers, whether direct or indirect, from charges to other persons and organisations.

Mr. Colvin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. When will the charges to nursery growers for growing season inspections be announced? The delay is causing considerable difficulty to nurserymen such as Hilliers in my constituency, who are heavily dependent on the export trade. If the charges are too swingeing there will be minimum export orders, which will only hand business to our continental competitors. Why cannot nurserymen such as Hilliers be licensed to carry out their own inspections, just as the seed trade does?

Mrs. Fenner: My attention has not been drawn to any particular difficulties, but we hope to circulate the provisional proposals to trade and producer interests within the next few weeks. On the question of licensing, the EEC directive requires Government certification, so inspection must be done by the Government.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister — [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—Give me a break.

Mr. Alex Carlile: He has never seen a cow.

Mr. Banks: Yes, I have. There are plenty on Wanstead Flats. Will the Minister consider charging farmers the storage costs of their overproduction which results in beef and butter mountains? We have beef and butter mountains in my constituency of Newham, North-West. Why do the Government refuse to give me the address of those mountains? Are they embarrassed or afraid of food riots in Stratford?

Mrs. Fenner: There is commercial confidentiality about giving the names of storage depots, and any payment for storage is part of the general EEC instruction.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Is my hon. Friend aware that many farmers in the Weald of Sussex, and particularly dairy farmers, resent the introduction of charges for statutory duties? I find it extraordinary that my hon. Friend cannot say how much the Exchequer saves by introducing such charges. If the Ministry cannot say how much is being saved, why introduce the charges in the first place?

Mrs. Fenner: We proposed the charges because there is an identifiable and substantial benefit to customers in cases where we now charge, or propose to charge. A precise estimate of the savings is difficult, because in some of the areas in which charges will be made we do not yet know the scale of demand for the service. Consequently, we cannot estimate the income.

Mr. Randall: Is the Minister aware that there is considerable feeling in the industry that statutory functions carried out in the public interest should be funded by the Government? Is she aware that many farmers are worried that the Minister will thrust on the industry the £2 million per annum cost of implementing the milk and dairy regulations? Furthermore, is she aware that there is considerable concern in the already hard-pressed dairy sector of the industry?

Mrs. Fenner: Assertions that statutory work is solely for the public good are wrong. Where there is private benefit, we expect the recipient to pay. The high quality and reputation of the products that are involved in the milk and dairy regulations work help to maintain consumption and thus benefit the producers' returns.

Mr. Livsey: In view of the statutory obligations that the Ministry has for testing, will the Minister comment on the contamination of milk in becquerels per litre in the high rainfall areas of Britain and compare them with those levels found in Holland, where the cows have been housed?

Mrs. Fenner: The levels in Holland are a matter for testing in that country. I can only reassure the hon. Gentleman that we tested in many spots in the entire United Kingdom. The figures that we announced are accurate. He will have seen that although the National Radiological Protection Board had marginally different figures, it had tested at fewer points than we had.

Cereals

4. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the final decision on cereal prices taken by the European Economic Community Council for 1985-86; and if the EEC Commission's proposal on prices for 1986-87 is based on the previous year's figure as adopted by the Council, or as operated by the Commission.

Mr. Jopling: The Council of Ministers took no decisions on cereals support prices for 1985-86. Price levels for 1986-87 were set by the Council at its meeting of 21 to 25 April and did not depend on those which the Commission applied in 1985-86.

Mr. Deakins: I am grateful to the Minister for the latter information. Does he accept that what happened in the

price negotiations last year, when the Commission overruled a West German veto on cereal price reductions, shows the fragility of the Luxembourg compromise and contradicts the assurances given to the House by the Foreign Secretary that the Single European Act posed no threat to the Luxembourg compromise?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman should recall that last year the Commission was obliged to take measures to maintain the smooth running of the cereals market. It is not helpful to quibble about this pragmatic approach in the circumstances of last year's deadlock. This year's decisions have been taken clearly by the Council without any threats of the Luxembourg compromise.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the recent discussions in Europe on agricultural prices have been disappointing? We shall not solve the basic problem of surplus production in Europe by tinkering with prices. We must get our European partners to consider a far more fundamental reform of the CAP.

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend is not as optimistic as he might be about the effects of the recent price-fixing. It constitutes a considerable reduction in prices in the cereals sector. I shall be surprised if it does not have some effect at the margins. I agree with my hon. Friend that one is unlikely to deal with the cereals problem by price policy alone. That is why, as he knows, I have lately been discussing—I have also mentioned it to the House—the prospects of a policy of set-aside, which could help us to deal with the growing surpluses.

Mr. John: Why, then, did the Ministry give evidence to the Select Committee, whose report was issued this week, that it was depending on prices alone to counter and control the cereals surplus? If the Minister is so confident that it will work at the margins, why will he not give us an estimate of the amount by which cereal production will be cut as a result of the price agreement?

Mr. Jopling: It is impossible to predict the effect on production, because the weather plays such an important part. I guess that the hon. Gentleman has read carefully what I have said during the past few months and that he knows that I have said that I believe we shall solve the problem of cereal surpluses only with a package of measures, of which price restraint should be a front-running member.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that that argument is convincing nobody? Indeed, I doubt whether he is convincing himself. What possible sense can there be in reducing prices, which will encourage every farmer in Europe to produce more cereals, while talking about a package of set-aside? Could he concentrate his mind on this subject and realise that only a mandatory set-aside throughout the Community and other surplus producing areas of the world will solve the problem?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend has advanced arguments that are familiar to the House. He will know that a mandatory set-aside is not very far removed from quotas and the House has largely agreed, although I know that my hon. Friend does not wholly agree, that it would be bad for Britain if we had quotas to deal with the cereals problem. I believe that a policy of a voluntary set-aside could sit very well with a policy of price discipline on the lines that we have succeeded in negotiating at the most recent price fixing.

Animals (Ritual Slaughter)

5. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when Her Majesty's Government expect to be able to announce their conclusions on the Farm Animal Welfare Council report on July 1985 on ritual slaughter; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government are giving careful consideration to the Council's report and to the many comments which have been received on it from interested parties. The response will be issued as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my hon. Friend agree that toleration of the rights of religious minorities is a mark of a civilised society, but that that toleration cannot be absolute? We now have a constructive report which was published as long ago as July 1985. Does she agree that, if people knew about ritual slaughter, the vast majority would find it abhorrent? Does she further agree that it is a problem which the Government will have to tackle sooner rather than later?

Mrs. Fenner: I assure my hon. Friend that I am mindful of the fact that the report is extremely important. We have received many comments and observations from a wide range of interested persons. We consult widely. I assure my hon. Friend that we are giving the matter the deepest consideration. We will take a decision and make our report just as soon as possible.

Mr. Maclean: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be difficult to find many veterinarians in the country who would support this abhorrent practice? Does she further agree that agriculture has enough enemies without it being associated in the slightest with pandering to this barbaric practice?

Mrs. Fenner: The issue has been debated in Parliament several times. The prevailing view has been that the religious requirements of the Jewish and Moslem communities should be respected in the absence of conclusive evidence that animals killed by religious methods suffer more than stunned animals. We now have this very important report. In view of decisions made by Parliament over many years, we recognise how important it is.

Sheep

6. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the present state of the sheep industry; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): The sheep sector is relatively profitable and I consider that producers should remain confident. We derive considerable benefits from the EC sheepmeat regime, and these will continue following the recent CAP price settlement.

Mr. Carlile: Is the Minister aware that, for sheep farmers in Wales, the fodder compensation scheme has failed to mitigate the consequences of last year's disastrous summer? Is he further aware that many fair-minded farmers feel that it has discriminated unfairly against them when they see their neighbours receiving compensation in precisely the same circumstances? Does he agree that the attitude of some banks, which charge many farmers as much as 3 per cent. above the base rate, is doing great damage to the sheep industry?

Mr. Gummer: It is true that if one tries to provide specific help for those in particular need one has to draw lines, and that means that people on the wrong side of the line find it unacceptable. The hon. Gentleman has made that point before. I do not think that it could have been done more fairly. I know he will accept that it is better to try to give the aid where it is needed than to provide blanket aid across the country. As for the hon. Gentleman's comment on the banks, one cannot comment on a general statement of that kind. In many cases the banks have been extremely helpful.

Mr. McQuarrie: My right hon. Friend should be aware that there is considerable disquiet in the sheep sector of the industry at the possibility that, if there are quotas on cereals and producers go out of production, they may well move into the sheep sector, causing considerable problems there. In the light of the excellent result achieved by my right hon. Friend in the EEC last week, despite what the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said — the sheep sector welcomed the achievement—we do not want to see over-production in the sheep sector as in the cereal sector.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right, and that is one of the reasons why the concept of quotas has its major disadvantages. We have to remind the House that in the price settlement we achieved the things that we sought. We got rid of the discriminatory proposals on flock sizes and stopped the proposed merger of Northern Ireland with the Republic into one region. As a result of the changes in the MCAs we have given an increase in the basic sheepmeat price. That means that there is considerable benefit for that part of the industry.

Sir Paul Hawkins: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the bargain he reached in Brussels over the sheepmeat regime. Will he please draw attention to the fact that the sheepmeat industry is probably one of the most profitable farming sectors at present?

Mr. Gummer: The sheepmeat industry provides a real reason for confidence in the future for those working in it. The industry faces a number of problems and we have to keep that closely in mind. However, I do not think that the industry is helped by the constant doom which we hear from the Liberal and Social Democratic parties.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To what extent have the sheep rearing higher land areas of the United Kingdom been affected by the fallout from Chernobyl? When the NRPB said today that the levels of fallout were 100 times higher at the weekend than today, where was it referring to? We were never given those figures. That may not be a departmental responsibility of the Minister, but, in so far as he has responsibility for agriculture, especially the sheep industry, will he look at that matter?

Mr. Gummer: The second part of the hon. Gentleman's question is a matter for the Department of the Environment, and I shall see that his points are raised with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, there are two ways in which we do no service to the public in this matter. The first is to cover up what has happened, as the Russians did, and the other is to spread alarm and despondency when it is entirely unnecessary.

Milk Quotas

10. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about permitted variations to the proposed standard milk quota.

Mr. Jopling: None other than those raised by hon. Members during the debate on the Agriculture Bill on 17 April. We have however consulted the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union about this issue. We shall be tabling amendments in another place to take account of the comments made. These amendments allow greater flexibility for arbitrators to depart from the standard yield to take account of individual circumstances. Those moves should be especially helpful to farmers on marginal land.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. Friend agree that many farmers on difficult land will find it difficult to reach yields of the standard quota? Therefore, will he be sympathetic to representations made on their behalf, even if they depart from the standard quota by less than the 20 per cent. mentioned in the Bill?

Mr. Jopling: I am glad to be able to say that it is our intention to remove that 20 per cent. restriction so that farmers, especially on more marginal land, can make better use of the arrangements. The impact of that will be to leave a good deal more discretion to the arbitrators.

Mr. John: Do the Government intend to introduce any other amendments to the new clause in another place?

Mr. Jopling: This is the most important amendment that we have decided to make, and we shall make any other amendments that we believe to be right in the light of circumstances.

Livestock (Profitability)

12. **Mr. Knox** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the level of profitability in the livestock sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The whole of the livestock sector will benefit from the recent agreement on CAP prices, in particular as a result of the devaluation of the green pound, which favours livestock as compared with the arable sector. Further, the reduction in cereal prices should be of benefit to the livestock sector as well.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that many milk producers have benefited from the reduction in feed costs and have enjoyed a consequent increase in profitability? Does he accept that this is a one-off exercise and that something must be done about milk prices if dairy farmers are to enjoy continued profitability in the future?

Mr. Jopling: I should point out to my hon. Friend that the devaluation of the green pound will raise the price level for milk by around 2·75 per cent. At the same time, he will remember that the cereal price package will reduce feed costs. In fact, for the cereal sector, the package should cut the price of feed grains by about 4 per cent. Those two factors should help dairy farmers quite considerably.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Minister draw the attention of his colleagues at the Scottish Office to the problem facing the livestock sector in the north of Scotland and in the

Highlands and Islands, especially as we are still seeing the feed-through effects of last year's very bad weather conditions, which have resulted in higher feed prices to the livestock sector, and which are now being accelerated through the agricultural economy to other aspects? If the Minister were to look constructively at other ways of providing additional support to that welcome help which the Government provided last year, we would be extremely grateful.

Mr. Jopling: My answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is yes. He has acknowledged the way in which the Government moved to help last autumn because of the very bad weather, in addition to the adjustment that we made to the grants for the less-favoured areas.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Is there not a certain lack of Conservative ideology in continuing a regime that the Government do not apply to other industries—that of maintaining profitability by having enormous unsaleable mountains and by selling some of the surplus to the Soviet Union at 15p a pound? Will my right hon. Friend explain to my constituents the logic of paying massive sums to dairy farmers to get them out of milk so that they can switch the land to livestock production?

Mr. Jopling: I agree with my hon. Friend—and he has heard me say so on many occasions—that the CAP has suffered over the years, because while in general its principles are right, it has been extremely badly managed by the application of too generous price increases. That has caused the surpluses to build up. However, the principles of the CAP are right. It was right to switch from a policy of maintaining agricultural incomes by deficiency payments and guaranteed prices to a system of support through import levies. Only the other day I looked at some of my hon. Friend's election addresses and noticed that there was nothing in them that argued against that switch in basic policy.

Organic Farming

13. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards organic farming.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department takes an interest in all farming systems, including what has become known as organic farming, with the objective of helping farmers to make the fullest possible use of the resources available to them according to the economic circumstances and to meet market requirements. Provided that those farming organically continue to pay attention to the market for their products, I believe that this form of production will develop to meet a specialised retail demand.

Mr. Davies: Does the Minister accept that, for all practical purposes, the Government give no assistance for research into, or development of, systems of organic farming? Does she not accept that there are very good reasons, on grounds of both personal and environmental health, for encouraging these practices, and that if the Government were to reverse their policies and encourage those systems they it would go some way towards introducing a more extensive form of farming and reducing surpluses?

Mrs. Fenner: The first part of the hon. Member's assertion is untrue. MAFF began funding a three-year project at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth in 1985, designed to obtain, on a whole-farm basis, information on nitrogen balance and the nitrogen cycle in organic farming systems. Work is planned and monitored with the assistance of a steering group which includes senior representatives of the organic farming sector. ADAS is also carrying out a three-year study, monitoring pests and diseases in organically grown crops on a commercial farm in Wiltshire.

Sir John Wells: Can my hon. Friend give some assurance to those who are anxious about the fact that there are no satisfactory definitions in organic farming? Consumers do not know how organic "organic" is. It would be helpful if there were some definitions.

Mrs. Fenner: The Community intends to take action to promote organic farming by introducing a legislative framework that will ensure free movement for organic produce — *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to give the answer, he might find out that I am interested in protecting the consumers' interests. The Commission is to make proposals for satisfactory guarantees to consumers through proper labelling.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the hon. Lady, in her usual straighforward way, tell organic farmers whether the Government have any proposals to assist with the marketing of organic produce? Will she also tell us whether she is satisfied with the statutory protection given to organic farmers against those who label their goods falsely as organic when they are not organic?

Mrs. Fenner: I have just answered the last part of the hon. and learned Member's question. The Commission and Europe are looking at the protection of the consumer in respect of the labelling of organic produce. As regards the promotion of marketing, I have no doubt that they will support Food from Britain, the organisation which markets both agricultural and horticultural produce.

Mr. Marland: Does my hon. Friend agree that we should see organic farming in proportion? At the moment we are about 80 per cent. self-sufficient in temperate foodstuffs. If there were a big move to organic farming, there would be a massive shortfall of temperate foodstuffs that we could produce in this country.

Mrs. Fenner: I believe that there is likely to be an increasing demand for organically grown produce, but, although organic farming methods have attractions for some producers, they are unlikely to be the total answer for British agriculture generally.

Fishing Industry

15. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the present state of the fishing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am satisfied that, with the common fisheries policy now firmly in place within an enlarged Community, confidence is returning to the fishing industry. The value of catches continues to increase year by year, and investment in construction and modernisation of fishing vessels appears to be running at a very healthy level.

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful for the Minister's response. Does he recall that at Question Time during the latter part of 1985 he indicated to me that before the end of the year he would make a statement on the future of the licensing system for the fishing of pelagic species? That statement has not yet appeared. Can he say when he expects it to appear? Will he accept that as long as there is delay there must be uncertainty in the industry and some suspicion about what is going on with regard to further licensing of freezer trawlers?

Mr. Gummer: I assure the hon. Gentleman that any suspicions in that sense are unfounded. The only suspicion that people ought to have is that we are trying to come to a proper decision in the proper time.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Is the Minister in a position to make a statement on the story that has been running in newspapers for the last few days to the effect that there is a plan to divide the fishing grounds into areas, which would be allocated to individual vessels? That is regarded as a horrific suggestion in the fishing industry in Scotland.

Mr. Gummer: If the right hon. Gentleman were to think for a moment about the possibility of doing that, he would understand that it is unlikely. There is no plan for an overall change of the present system.

Dr. Godman: Is the Minister satisfied with the performance of the Sea Fish Industry Authority in the promotion and marketing of the product?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure the hon. Gentleman will accept that one is never wholly satisfied with any organisation that seeks to market anything. I am keen on the promotion of fish, a thoroughly good product which should be very widely eaten and which provides extremely good value for money. The SFIA is doing a good job and has increasingly proved that to the industry. It now has considerable support in the industry for the operation it is carrying out in circumstances that are not at all easy, particularly since herring was off the menu for so long and now has come back on it more widely.

Mr. McQuarrie: I should like to congratulate my right hon. Friend on the award last week of the FEOGA grants to the fishing industry. The Scottish fishing industry is extremely grateful for the £2 million which was granted to it by FEOGA last week. In my constituency, 17 projects will benefit by £1·2 million. Long may my right hon. Friend continue to work as hard for the fishing industry in Scotland as he has done since he took office.

Mr. Gummer: It is not I who should be congratulated, but my hon. Friend, on the enterprise of his constituents. I point out to him that the common fisheries policy, which is producing such dividends to the United Kingdom, was wholly opposed by the Labour party, which thought that it would lead to the outrageous destruction of British fishing interests. In fact, we have seen that it is one of the most progressive and sensible policies that we have entered into for many years.

Mr. Randall: Is the Minister aware that there are still a substantial number of United Kingdom quotas which are not being taken up? Will he tell the House what specific steps he will take to encourage fishermen, especially English and Welsh fishermen, to exploit those quotas? Is he aware that if they are not taken up they will be exploited by other countries, which will make negotiations on next year's quotas much more difficult?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is right. It is important that we should fish to our quotas, except that some of the quotas are there for historic reasons but have not been able to be fished because the fish have not been there. We are concerned about that, because we want realistic quotas in every case. The hon. Gentleman is right to suggest that we should fish to our quotas. In the end it is the industry which must respond to that, and not the Government who must force it to do so. I encourage the industry in all cases that I can.

Cocoa, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance

17. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the Cocoa, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance; what was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: My right hon. Friend last met the president of the Cocoa, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance on 25 October when he addressed the annual luncheon of the alliance on a wide range of issues of concern to the confectionery industry.

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that comment. Will she take on board the need to stop the dumping of non-EEC confectionery, which is undermining employment in this country because bags of sugar confectionery are being sold into the wholesale trade at 9p a bag to retail at 20p, as opposed to double that price for United Kingdom confectionery?

Mrs. Fenner: There are well-established rules which govern international trade. Imports from third countries are subject to import duties. Any substantiated evidence of unfair competition will be urgently examined. I trust that my hon. Friend will bring it before my Department.

Hill Farming

21. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the present state of hill farming; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The state of hill farming is considered every year in the context of the autumn review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands. As a result of last year's review, hill livestock compensatory amounts were increased by an average of 11 per cent. This was in addition to the special help, including exceptional weather aid payments, offered to farmers in many hill areas most adversely affected by last year's bad weather. Higher rates of capital grant and grants for on-farm diversification are also available in the less-favoured areas to compensate for the special hardship which farmers face there.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Minister comment on the fact that some farmers in upland areas are on family income supplement, which is a most unsatisfactory state of affairs? What will the Government do about it?

Mrs. Fenner: As my right hon. Friend pointed out, last year some payments were made in advance to help with that. The 11 per cent. increase above the amount which was paid out in 1985 will have benefited some 60,000 to 65,000 producers.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Freeson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Freeson: Has the Prime Minister seen today's report of the Congressional decision to refuse endorsements of the latest proposals for arms exports to a middle east country? Does she sympathise with that rejection? Will she participate in trying to cut the obscene pouring of billions of pounds' worth of offensive arms equipment into middle east countries, causing political instability and the threat and risk of further wars in that area?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, that is not a matter for me. He will also be aware of our decision at the Tokyo summit not to export arms to Libya.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: Has my right hon. Friend yet had time to consider the worrying fall in the number of Americans planning to visit the United Kingdom since the Libyan bombing? As that is completely unjustified, is she aware of any plans to invite the United States' First Lady to the royal wedding, since an early invitation followed by an early acceptance may well go some way towards reversing that trend?

The Prime Minister: That is not a matter for me, but I am well aware of the reports of the reduction in the number of tourists from America coming to the United Kingdom, and I have already had something to say about it. They should continue to come. This is a marvellous country to visit, it is extremely safe, and there is a great deal going on that they will wish to see this summer.

Mr. Cartwright: Has the Prime Minister yet had time to consider the Privileges Committee recommendation that Mr. Richard Evans of *The Times* be suspended from the Lobby for six months for publishing a leaked report from the Environment Select Committee? Does she not think it ironic that Select Committees, set up to throw light on the workings of Government Departments, should be in danger of establishing rules of secrecy around their affairs which they would condemn if it occurred in Whitehall? If the House were to punish a journalist while letting the source of the leak go scot free, would it not appear to many outside as both pompous and extremely unfair?

The Prime Minister: That is a House of Commons matter, and the House of Commons will decide.

Q2. **Mr. Shersby** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Shersby: Is my right hon. Friend aware that she has the widespread support of the British people for the initiative she has taken to prevent terrorism? Will she take time today to consider the terrorism of British scientists by the Animal Liberation Front, which has caused millions of pounds' worth of damage during the past year and which is now resorting to the use of bombs and other forms of violence?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. One can only utterly condemn the activities of the animal liberation movement, which deliberately poisons and contaminates food to cause great harm to human beings, and deliberately lets out animals, which causes harm to other animals. We support the police in their activities to deal with it. If further legislation were needed, we should not hesitate to introduce it.

Mr. Kinnock: First, I endorse every word of the Prime Minister's last answer.

In the wake of the Chernobyl disaster, is the right hon. Lady aware of the widespread feeling that the co-ordination of information between her relevant Ministers has been inadequate? Does she accept that the best assurance against unjustified alarm is candid information and coherent organisation by the Government? Will she ensure that clear and explicit information is provided to the general public about the form, incidence and implications of radioactive contamination in Britain?

The Prime Minister: I read what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said on Tuesday. I thought that it was an excellent statement. It was very well received. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that, after the arrival of the radioactive cloud over the United Kingdom last Friday, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food set up an incident room to provide expert advice on foodstuffs, and the Department of the Environment is acting as the overall lead Department, with responsibility for co-ordinating, monitoring and disseminating relevant information and acting as a focal point for inquiries.

Mr. Kinnock: When the right hon. Lady has time, will she ensure that action is taken to remove the inconsistencies that have been apparent in the information, and that the information is put in a form which the general public can clearly comprehend?

The Prime Minister: That is one reason for the Department of the Environment information room — it acts a clearing-house for information. I sympathise with the right hon. Gentleman's request to try to put the information in a form that ordinary people can understand.

Mr. Ian Lloyd: May I first congratulate the Prime Minister on her safe return from an outstandingly successful conference. May I, in the context of the Chernobyl disaster, refer her to the tendentious, inaccurate and damaging advertisement published by Friends of the Earth in *The Times* today. Does she agree that the damage done to Western economies by OPEC in the last decade would pale into total insignificance if Western Governments were to be panicked by public reaction into closing down the nuclear industry?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. He is the first to know and to say that the record of the nuclear industry in this country has been excellent. As far as civil installations are concerned, there has been no fatality in this country. Provided we go on, as we shall, in safety in design, safety in manufacturing, safety in the mode of

operation and safety in maintenance, I believe that that record will continue and will gain public confidence once again.

Q3. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: On reflection, does the Prime Minister not agree that she was rather unfair and hasty in dismissing the present Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food from his position as chairman of the Conservative party? Is she aware that it is an open secret here that, even among his Cabinet colleagues, there is a good deal of dissatisfaction at the way in which the present chairman of the Tory party is carrying on, and no doubt by tomorrow morning there will be even more dissatisfaction? Being no doubt, in some respects at least, a fair-minded person, why does the Prime Minister not bring back the little fellow and give him another chance?

The Prime Minister: Both of them do extremely well wherever they serve, and that is what the hon. Gentleman does not like.

Mr. Ralph Howell: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the outstanding part that she played in the success of the Tokyo summit and say how pleased I am that far greater prominence was given to the problems of agriculture than at any previous summit. May I tell my right hon. Friend that the present policy of cutting agricultural prices will fail, and urge her urgently to call a conference of all nations which have agricultural exports to form a concerted policy in order to avoid a trade war across the Atlantic?

The Prime Minister: As I think my hon. Friend knows, for the first time we had quite a considerable discussion on agriculture and on the tendency to protect and subsidise it so that we have enormous surpluses. He is the first to know that we have to find a way of getting down those surpluses. I am well aware of his personal opinion that price reductions may not be the only way, but I think he will agree, from the communiqué at the Tokyo summit, that for the first time all nations are looking at it together as a common problem instead of looking at it as a matter of competitive subsidies and competitive protection. I think that to look at it together and to co-operate in finding a solution—and through OECD—is the best way to go about it.

Tourism

Q5. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to appoint a Minister with responsibility solely for tourism.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment exercises overall ministerial responsibility for policy towards tourism very effectively.

Mr. Gregory: I appreciate my right hon. Friend's comments. I hope that at the next opportunity she will consider a full-time post, bearing in mind that tourism is the fastest growth sector in the economy. Does my right hon. Friend understand that some 70,000 jobs were created last year and that those jobs are in no way, as the Opposition suggest, Mickey Mouse jobs?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that they are not Mickey Mouse jobs. Tourism is an enormous industry in this country. Total turnover in 1985 was around £13 billion, which is far greater than that of the aerospace industry and about the same as the whole of that of the motor industry. Altogether that industry supports between 1 million and 1·5 million jobs. It is a growing industry. It will produce more jobs. However, I believe that the present arrangements under my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment are very effective.

Dr. Godman: Does the Prime Minister agree that, in the interests of the African, Caribbean and Pacific cane sugar-producing countries and the sugar beet industry——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question concerns tourism.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the answer that she has just given, and consider whether it would be a good idea to promote one of our women Members of Parliament into that job as, clearly, it is the women, the wives abroad and at home, who are——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would that add to tourism?

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Yes. The women have far more say on tourism than the men.

The Prime Minister: I shall of course consider putting someone who will suit my hon. Friend in that Department.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Is the right hon. Lady aware that the tourist industry is liable to be affected by the report of John Large Associates, consultant engineers, which suggests that many of our nuclear power stations are less safe than those in the Soviet Union? In particular, will she institute a review of safety procedures at the Trawsfynydd power station, which is in one of our finest Welsh tourist areas?

The Prime Minister: The hon. and learned Gentleman will have heard me reply on the excellent safety record of civil nuclear installations in this country. He is casting aspersions on our most excellent nuclear inspectorate.

Mr. Murphy: Will my right hon. Friend consider putting tourism together with the arts and heritage to form one larger and more effective Ministry with Cabinet rank, so that we can promote those great assets of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: All those things are represented at Cabinet rank. Tourism comes under my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, and heritage and various other things come under my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I am often asked to take Departments apart and put them back together again in different ways. I am reluctant to do so because I think that too much effort goes into reorganisation and too little into considering the real subject.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Prime Minister aware that it seems a little strange that Tory Members of Parliament want a new Minister responsible for tourism when they already have one—the Prime Minister herself? Since she came to public office in 1979, she has gallivanted round the world so many times that she has cost the British taxpayer more than £2·5 million already. What I want to know is how much the last Tokyo jaunt cost.

The Prime Minister: I do not think that I can be wholly responsible for the 1 million to 1·5 million jobs that tourism has created in this country.

Q7. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the outstanding achievement of the Tokyo summit has been the extraordinary unanimity that it has been possible for her to achieve among a large number of disparate sovereign nations? Does she agree that that unity contrasts rather strangely with the disunity that we see in the misnamed alliance parties, whose Members are rather short in number in the Chamber today?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Soley: Did the Prime Minister take a recent opportunity to remind President Reagan that the mining of harbours in Nicaragua and the funding of the Contras are real forms of terrorism, especially in view of the fact that the Government of Nicaragua were elected democratically, as confirmed by an all-party committee of the House —the Human Rights Parliamentary Group?

The Prime Minister: The matter was discussed in Tokyo, I believe, among the Foreign Ministers. It was made perfectly clear that both we and the United States support the Contadora process. The regime in Nicaragua is becoming more oppressive. The free publication of some church newspapers and radio station broadcasts has been stopped.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: While my right hon. Friend was so splendidly batting for Britain in Tokyo, did she notice that back home, in Wapping, 140 British police officers were injured, many of them badly, by those who masqueraded as peaceful pickets outside the printing plant? Did she notice also that an hon. Member described those police officers as "All that is rotten in our society"? Does my right hon. Friend agree with those comments? Will she invite the Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Labour party, to remove that smear from the Metropolitan police?

The Prime Minister: I saw the reports to which my hon. Friend referred, both of the activities last Saturday night outside the printing plant in Wapping—one can only totally and utterly condemn them and say that they were quite deplorable in terms of the effect on the police —and of the remarks of an hon. Member, which I also totally and utterly condemn. We support the police in the way in which they carry out their duties. Some 300 police have been injured in the demonstration outside the printing plant in Wapping. I note that the Labour party condones the tactics that lead to violence on the picket line at Wapping. The Labour party voted against the Public Order Bill and the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. It tolerates Labour councils which harass the police and it cheers speakers at its conference describing the police as "the enemy". Our view is totally different. We support and admire the police.

Food Imports (East Europe)

3.33 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the EEC provisional agreement yesterday to ban food imports from east Europe except East Germany.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): Provisional agreement, subject to formal approval, has been reached on a Commission proposal for a temporary ban on the import of certain foodstuffs from countries falling within an approximate radius of 1,000 km of Chernobyl. The countries are the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. It is a short-term precautionary measure which would, if formally approved, run until 31 May.

Mr. Taylor: How can my hon. Friend justify the exclusion of East Germany from the ban, bearing in mind that parts of East Germany are much nearer to the disaster than parts of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, particularly when East Germany has provided consistently a notorious vehicle whereby East Germany trade slips through to the West because of the inner German trade agreement? How can we determine which east European food comes from East Germany? If there is a problem of contaminated food reaching our constituents, why should my hon. Friend leave this huge loophole? If there is not a real problem, as suggested by the World Health Organisation, is this not a rather silly public relations ploy?

Mr. Eggar: The greater part of the German Democratic Republic does not fall within the approximate 1,000 km range which has been proposed by the Commission and accepted in principle by member states. My hon. Friend pointed to an alleged loophole as a result of inner German trade. If the regulation came into operation, it would have a direct effect throughout the Community. It would be up to the West German authorities to give effect in practice to the ban.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): What will happen to the food that has already been exported to the West? What are those foodstuffs? What action has been taken?

Mr. Eggar: The ban is expected to come into effect at midday on Saturday. Obviously the health authorities in Community countries will keep a close watch on the products already here.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): My hon. Friend has said that it will be a short-term ban. What will be the likely effect of the ban on cattle and pigs? Will it be safe to eat that meat in, say, six months' time? What discussions is my hon. Friend having with the food industry in Britain on this matter?

Mr. Eggar: The ban includes fresh meat and offal from the eastern European countries which I have mentioned. We shall, of course, keep the ban under constant review as new scientific evidence is produced during the next few weeks.

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Durham): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the trade in vegetables and meat between East and West Germany leaves a loophole? Does he agree that it is possible for pork, bacon, vegetable products, and so on to be transferred from Poland or Czechoslovakia to East Germany and then onward? Does he agree that that gap will not be closed by the agreement and that, therefore, my constituents and the whole of the British community are left at risk? That is not acceptable.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman must be careful not to exaggerate fears and stir up concerns which are not justified. I have already made it clear that the Community countries responsible for imports from other countries will be responsible for checking the origin of the goods that come in.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Will my hon. Friend explain how we shall institute any safeguards here in respect of those commodities that used frequently to come into the Common Market and Britain from Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and elsewhere? We tried to enforce anti-dumping regulations, but those goods could go through East Germany. Will any steps be taken to prevent that being repeated?

Mr. Eggar: It has been made clear to the West German authorities that they have a responsibility to give effect in practice to the ban. They are well aware of that alleged loophole, and I am sure that they will take the necessary precautions.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): In considering these matters, have the Government taken account of the difference in acceptable standards between one country and another in terms of derived emergency reference levels? My point is that milk in the United Kingdom from a farm in Cumbria has an emergency reference level of more than 1,000 becquerels a litre, which is more than twice the permitted limit——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about imports from Germany.

Mr. Cook: I was referring, Sir, to the different standards in European countries. I am asking whether account has been taken of those differences. I simply offered that comment as an explanation. I am concerned that acceptable limits here may be considered hazardous elsewhere and that, therefore, we may be jeopardising our electorate without knowing it.

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's point. Tomorrow and next week meetings will take place among the experts of the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Community countries in an attempt to agree as far as possible the advice that is given.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that he has convinced no one with his original answer? Why cannot the ban come into effect immediately?

Mr. Eggar: Under the Community procedure, the ban cannot come into effect until all the countries have given their agreement. We expect that agreement to be given tomorrow, with the ban coming into effect on Saturday. *[Interruption.]* I heard the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) say that it will take three years. I am not sure how he can seriously put forward that point of view when the Community has acted extremely rapidly.

Mr. Speaker: Order. He has not done it.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I endorse entirely the Minister's sensible view that the spreading of unnecessary public alarm should not be encouraged by this House. However, his response to the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Hughes) did not go as far as it ought to go towards achieving that very reasonable objective, for the simple reason that it made it clear that there is a loophole that has not been filled. Are the Government unable to do anything else to reassure the British public that the loophole through East Germany is not one from which this country may suffer?

Mr. Eggar: There is no loophole. First, the German Democratic Republic falls without the 1,000 km area. Secondly, if such imports were routed through East Germany from other COMECON countries, there would be a duty on the West German authorities to make sure that the origins were checked.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): If there were direct exports from East Germany to this country, how should we be able to stop them? Why is it not possible for this country to act unilaterally, without waiting for our EEC partners, and impose a ban at once?

Mr. Eggar: We are talking about a ban that is to come into effect on Saturday. Very stringent checks are already being made on fresh foodstuffs, including foodstuffs that are not included on the Community's list. As to the possibility of direct exports of listed foodstuffs to this country from East Germany, we have the same obligation as the West German authorities to ensure that they meet the criteria.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): Does my hon. Friend agree that the West German Government would not have agreed to this procedure if they were not satisfied that they would be able to check the origin of the goods entering their country?

Mr. Eggar: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The European Community was convinced at its meeting earlier this week that it was practicable to introduce these measures.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): In view of the acrimonious discussions at official level, is the Minister satisfied that the Government of every country will agree to this ban? Will he also reconsider the loophole that has been discovered relating to imports from East Germany? How will the Government of West Germany know whether food routed through East Germany is East German in origin? They will have only the word of another Government to go on. It is not fair to the Government of West Germany.

Mr. Eggar: I am unaware of the acrimonious discussions to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman relies upon the *Financial Times*, he ought to have more impeccable sources. If the West German Government are convinced that they can introduce the necessary measures to ensure that the ban is followed through, we should have no reason to doubt them.

Parliamentary Papers (Delivery)

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Today is the latest in a succession of days when the Deliverer of the Vote has failed to deliver the Vote bundle to a number of right hon. and hon. Members. I wonder whether this is a matter which I ought to raise with you, Mr. Speaker. The Deliverer of the Vote has made the excuse that there is staff sickness. He seems to be unaware of the inadequacies of the postal service. I am wondering whether something could be done to ensure that the Vote bundle is delivered promptly.

Mr. Speaker: I shall look into the matter while the Prime Minister is making her statement. If the hon. Gentleman will raise the matter again at the end of her statement, I shall deal with it.

Later—

Mr. Baker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to make the point again, or may I deal with it straight away?

Mr. Baker: I wish to apologise to you, Mr. Speaker, for not having given you notice of it. I do not expect an answer now, but I ask you to look into the matter.

This is the last of a large number of days on which many of us have received our parliamentary papers late. I am collecting the notes which the Deliverer issues. He says that staff sickness is the cause of the late delivery. I wonder whether alternative arrangements could be made. I wish to place on record the fact that sadly the post, which is the alternative method of getting the papers to many of us which he uses, is simply not up to it these days. It no longer delivers papers the day after posting. I should be grateful if arrangements could be made for prompt delivery of the papers.

Mr. Speaker: When the hon. Gentleman raised the matter earlier, I undertook to look into it, and I have done so. I understand that the standard of service provided by the Deliverer of the Vote in recent days has deteriorated somewhat.

I am informed that there has been sickness among the staff concerned which made it impossible to maintain the standard of service which is normally provided. It is expected that full service will be restored next week.

I regret the inconvenience that has been caused to the hon. Gentleman and to other hon. Members. I shall look again at what the hon. Gentleman has said about the bad service continuing over a longer period.

Tokyo Economic Summit

3.44 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement on the economic summit held in Tokyo on 4-6 May at which I was accompanied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Copies of the statements issued by the summit have been placed in the Library of the House.

The summit dealt with five principal issues: international terrorism, the Soviet nuclear accident, economic policy, protectionism and agriculture.

On international terrorism, we specified a number of measures which each of us resolved to apply in our own jurisdiction and agreed to encourage others to apply as widely as possible. The measures are: refusal to export arms to states which can be clearly shown to be involved in sponsoring or supporting terrorism; strict limits on the size of the diplomatic and consular missions of such states, controls on the travel of their members and radical reductions or closure of their missions where appropriate; denial of entry to all our countries for persons who have been expelled or excluded from any one of them for reasons connected with terrorism; improved extradition procedures in order to bring suspected terrorists to trial; stricter immigration and visa requirements in respect of nationals of states responsible for terrorism; and the closest possible bilateral and multilateral co-operation between police and security organisations in the fight against terrorism. We also agreed to consider together any further measures which may be needed.

Our statement will be a clear signal that the summit nations will not tolerate state-sponsored terrorism and it will bring home to those who practise such terrorism the heavy costs which they will incur. Terrorism must be resisted, not appeased.

We examined the implications of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station. We expressed our sympathy for those affected and offered any assistance that might be requested. Our statement recorded our continuing confidence in a properly managed nuclear power industry, that is, one which sets the highest possible standards of safety in the design, manufacture, operation and maintenance of nuclear installations. Each country has a responsibility to adhere to those standards, both to its citizens and to the wider community. Each country also has a responsibility to provide promptly detailed and complete information on nuclear emergencies, especially those with consequences across national frontiers.

We therefore recommended that an international convention should be drawn up, as soon as possible, which would commit the parties to report and exchange information in the event of nuclear emergencies.

In our discussion of economic matters, we noted that the economies of the industrialised countries are now in their fourth year of expansion, that in all our countries the rate of inflation has been declining; that this decline, in conjunction with continuing prudent fiscal and monetary policies, has created the conditions for lower interest rates; and that there has been a significant shift in the pattern of exchange rates which better reflects fundamental economic conditions.

We agreed that the recent decline in oil prices would help to sustain non-inflationary growth and increase the volume of world trade.

We established new arrangements between the seven summit countries to make economic co-operation more effective.

We recognised that the world economy still faced a number of difficult challenges.

Although we have had some success in creating new jobs to meet additions to the labour market, unemployment remains excessively high in many of the summit countries. Other persistent problems are large budgetary deficits and trade imbalances, protectionist pressures and the continuing difficulties of many developing countries and severe debt problems for some.

But overall we agreed that developments since our last meeting in Bonn have demonstrated the effectiveness of our policies; and that continuation of them will enhance the prospects for, and confidence in, the future of the world economy.

In dealing with protectionism, we reiterated our support for the early launching of a new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the GATT and looked for decisive progress at the ministerial meeting already scheduled for September.

We also proposed that the new round should among other things address the issues of trade in services, foreign direct investment and intellectual property rights. I believe that this last point will be especially welcomed by the many British companies which have seen their copyrights and patents blatantly disregarded.

In our discussions on agriculture, so important to the well-being of our rural communities, we considered in particular the consequencies of world-wide agricultural surpluses. These have arisen as a result of technological change and of long-standing policies of domestic subsidy and protection in all the summit countries. We recognised that the existence of these surpluses and efforts to dispose of them harm the economies of certain developing countries and aggravate the risk of wider protectionist pressures. We agreed that, as these concerns were common to all summit countries, they could be resolved only by effective co-operation between us; they cannot be solved by competitive subsidies and protection.

We discussed a considerable number of other issues including East-West relations and arms control, the middle east, South Africa and the need to maintain the momentum of international action against traffic in drugs, following up the initiative taken by the United Kingdom at the Bonn economic summit last year.

I should like to pay tribute to the skilful and effective chairmanship of the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Nakasone, which contributed greatly to the success of the meeting.

The hallmarks of this summit were unity and confidence: unity in our determination to see that those who practise state terrorism do not succeed; confidence that our economic policies are right and will bring greater prosperity to our peoples. The United Kingdom was able to play a prominent role in achieving these results and in ensuring a valuable, constructive and forward-looking summit.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I first endorse the general view expressed by the summit seven on the implications of the disaster at Chernobyl? May I also

express the hope that each country will rigorously adhere to the statements on high standards of safety, candid information and an effective response to emergencies, both domestically and internationally? Even though I appreciate the impediments, may I particularly support the efforts to secure an international convention committing countries that produce nuclear energy to report and exchange information?

On economic matters, the summit statement surpasses all previous statements in its self-satisfied complacency. In so far as some significant action was proposed, why did not the Prime Minister support the attempts of the United States Treasury Secretary, James Baker, to secure some real co-ordination in the international trade and financial system? Is an annual meeting between seven Finance Ministers simply to "review" performance, as the statement puts it, not a pathetically inadequate response to the need for international co-operation and co-ordination to combat unemployment and under-development?

I am sure that the whole House will recognise the general worthiness of the summit statement on terrorism. However, does not the view of the Japanese Government, that the implementation of the statement on terrorism

"is a matter left for each country's judgment"

and

"there is virtually no measure which Japan should take in a concrete way"

somewhat reduce the validity of that declaration on terrorism?

What is the Prime Minister's response to the post summit statements of both President Reagan and Vice-President Bush concerning Syria? Does she agree with Signor Craxi that military action is "precluded" by the Tokyo agreement? Can the right hon. Lady clear up the confusion that obviously exists on this vital question among the Japanese, the Italians and the Americans, since they obviously hold different views about what "mission accomplished" actually means?

Frankly, if the permissive and vague statement on terrorism was supposed to be the great achievement of last weekend in Tokyo, this summit reached new levels of stagnation, selfishness and superficiality.

The Prime Minister: Whatever the right hon. Gentleman says, he cannot detract from the great success of the summit, which was recognised by those there and almost universally. I found his statement excessively banal.

I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for what he said about the Chernobyl nuclear accident. I think that he endorsed what the summit said about it.

With regard to international co-operation on monetary matters and the world economy, we worked very closely with Secretary Baker, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and we have worked closely together throughout the year. There have been excellent results from that co-operation and from the summit.

There is a very clear declaration on terrorism, to which all summit countries are committed. We shall obviously be monitoring its application.

With regard to any other countries which may or may not seem to exercise state-sponsored terrorism, we shall have to consider this when and if we have evidence which clearly means that they are involved in state-sponsored terrorism. There would have to be consultation among the summit seven to apply sanctions to any other country.

Sir Frederic Bennett (Torbay): In respect of the terrorist document, the Prime Minister has been among the first to realise that an essential element in the long-term treatment of the matter will be to obtain an agreement on the ground of extradition and somehow to co-ordinate extradition laws so that people cannot escape responsibility for terrorism by opposing extradition on political grounds. Although the Prime Minister obviously could not obtain immediate results, did she find a generally sympathetic attitude towards the idea that this will be an essential feature in the conquest of terrorism?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Improved extradition procedures were one factor which was highlighted by the summit countries. My right hon. Friend is aware that we are looking to improve our extradition procedures because they are not sufficient to enable us to ratify some European conventions. We have published our intentions in a White Paper and measures will come forward in the Criminal Justice Bill next Session.

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): What has made the Prime Minister so much more enthusiastic about summits than she was seven years ago, especially since the 1979 Tokyo communiqué was rather more precise on this subject than is the present communiqué? What is her position on exchange rates? Does she agree with Mr. James Baker that this is the most important development since the end of Bretton Woods, or was she correctly reported as expressing complete scepticism about the ability to achieve any stability in exchange rates?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman will be aware, I prefer summits that meet only once a year to those that meet three times a year. In Europe, we no longer meet three times a year, as we did when he was President of the EEC. It has been reduced to twice a year, which most people would agree is a great improvement and is about the right number.

The right hon. Gentleman will recall the previous Tokyo summit in 1979, which dealt with oil imports. It was not the world's most successful summit either in its conclusions or in its unity.

Thr right hon. Gentleman would be the first to know that there can be no such thing as a universal fixed exchange rate for all countries unless all of them run their economies in the same way. Even then, the exchange rate could be badly upset by sudden events such as increases or reductions in oil prices. He would be the first to know why the Bretton Woods system broke down and the first to be aware that, for the time being, the G5 countries have what could be called a managed float. It can be managed only because the yen and the dollar got wholly out of line with the underlying factors in their economies. Therefore, the measures taken are meant to bring them more into line with the underlying economic strength of both countries.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that all responsible Members on both sides of the House will welcome what she has said about the international agreement to combat the scourge of international terrorism? Can she say a few more words about what is proposed for the future? Will she be a little more specific about the further measures to be considered?

The Prime Minister: A number of proposals were made for further measures varying from completely excluding—as we have done—Libyan people's bureaux

[The Prime Minister]

from countries, instead of reducing them, to taking sterner measures to reduce the amount of oil which we take from Libya. Those matters will be further considered among us and, if necessary, further recommendations will be made.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): As for protectionism, does the Prime Minister remember that, some months ago, she and other Ministers promised the country thousands of jobs and contracts arising from the star wars project? She must have known then that America operates enormous protectionism which would prevent our getting more than a minimal number of jobs. Was that matter raised at Tokyo and if so, with what results?

The Prime Minister: Our scientists and companies will compete for SDI contracts in the usual way. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we have some specialists in certain aspects of SDI work who stand a very good chance of getting more contracts.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): May I remind my right hon. Friend of the world-wide condemnation of the Soviet Union for not notifying the world immediately of the disaster at Chernobyl? I welcome her statement from the summit that assistance will be offered to the Soviet Union in the wake of the disaster. Is that assistance without conditions?

The Prime Minister: We recommend that, through the International Atomic Energy Agency, we should set up a more effective code for notification in such circumstances, which we obviously hope will not occur again. Nevertheless, it would be better to have a proper convention. We shall respond to any request for assistance. We have responded in so far as we have been asked, and, as far as I am aware, no conditions are attached to our offer. We intend and want to be as helpful as possible in these circumstances.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Did the Prime Minister raise with President Mitterrand the French terrorist attack in New Zealand when two Greenpeace crew members were killed by French agents, especially as the purpose of the Greenpeace mission was to draw the world's attention to the effects in the Pacific of French nuclear tests?

Has the right hon. Lady considered making available to the Soviet Union the food surpluses in the Common Market as their food supplies have been badly affected by the tragedy at Chernobyl?

The Prime Minister: I did not discuss the Greenpeace matter in New Zealand with the French President. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that France has apologised for the incident and is anxious to do as much as it can to clear up any outstanding issues with New Zealand.

As for food surpluses, the right hon. Gentleman will be aware that they regularly find their way to the Soviet Union. Indeed, I am often questioned in the House about the cheap rates at which they go to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is my right hon. Friend aware that her robust approach to the Japanese regarding discriminatory tariffs on Scotch whisky was much admired? How optimistic is she that her efforts have borne fruit? Did she have the opportunity to raise with President Reagan the threat of increased tariffs on Scotch whisky in the United States, bearing in mind the fact that Scotch whisky is one of our most successful and important exports?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend knows that I tackled Prime Minister Nakasone about the enormously high tax that the Japanese put on Scotch whisky, which I regard as thoroughly discriminating and something of a test of whether the Japanese are really prepared to accept more imports to go a little way to redress their colossal external balance of trade. I made the same point to the President of the United States, because the matter has been raised in connection with the enlargement of the European Community. I said that I thought that it would be utterly wrong if any unilateral retaliation were taken. There must be discussion in GATT, if anywhere, and I hope that no action whatever will be taken against Scotch whisky.

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): Will the Prime Minister be a little more specific about the impact of the statement on co-operation against international terrorism? Is there to be increased funding for Interpol, which is short of resources? Are there to be any moves towards economic sanctions, following the example of the United States requesting the withdrawal of oil investments in Libya?

Is there to be any cut in arms trading to north Africa, Africa generally and the middle east? Was any consideration given to Mr. Peres' recent proposal for regional development plans for the middle east, which would do more than anything else to reduce instability and the threats of war and violence there?

The Prime Minister: With regard to Interpol, I am not aware of any shortage of resources as we intend to maximise co-operation. If there is a shortage, we must consider that. The right hon. Gentleman is aware that we do our level best to ensure that the police in Britain have the resources that they need. That would include co-operation between our police forces and others.

There is no embargo on oil in this communiqué, but the matter was discussed and could be considered further. As I said in my initial reply, we agreed on a refusal to export arms to states which sponsor or support terrorism. No doubt the Peres economic programmes would be of great help to some countries in the middle east, but they are no substitute for a political initiative.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): When my right hon. Friend discussed British and other exports to Japan with the Japanese Prime Minister, did she say that, in addition to the unreasonably high import duties that they impose, despite their vast trading surplus, their retail system and specially elaborate method of mark-ups on imported goods which could possibly compete with Japanese-produced goods are deliberately designed to make it impossible for us to have a fair trading relationship with a country that we all very much admire?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Their retail system is grossly inefficient. However good might be the product that we are able to export to Japan, it cannot go into anything like as effective a retail distribution system as we have. We have raised this matter many times. Their distribution system is inefficient and grossly overmanned. I am afraid that it is a cultural problem and will take quite a long time to redress.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Earlier the Prime Minister justified the use of terrorism against Nicaragua on

the ground that the regime has become even more authoritarian. Does she not realise that she has opened the door to any group of people who, on losing an election, choose to move outside the borders of their country and seek the finance, training and weapons of a neighbouring power to carry on their campaign against their country, using the methods of terror? Does she not realise that she is making the matter worse?

The Prime Minister: At no time did I justify the use of terrorism. I said that we support the Contadora process, which is a peaceful process. I noted in passing that the regime in Nicaragua is becoming more oppressive. Both of those are facts and do not warrant the premise on which the hon. Gentleman's question was based.

Mr. Dennis Walters (Westbury): Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that sufficient progress was made in agreeing what steps are necessary to deal with the problems underlying terrorism, such as a serious new peace initiative in the middle east?

The Prime Minister: Foreign Ministers discussed the middle east. I agree with my hon. Friend. We are anxious that there is no new political initiative. We want there to be one. Several have collapsed and it is extremely difficult to find one that will be successful. We shall continue the search. My hon. Friend knows that I shall visit Israel later this summer—if we can call it summer—and we will do what we can to consider the matter before then.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Can Mr. Reagan take unilateral action against Syria now, in the light of discussions with the Prime Minister?

As for kidnap insurance and the Government's apparent desire to clamp down on these matters, did the Prime Minister raise the issue with other Heads of State? What was resolved, or does she intend to turn a blind eye?

The Prime Minister: The communiqué mentions Libya, but it does not mention any other state. If it applied to any other state, we should have to have evidence that the terrorism was state sponsored, similar to that in regard to Libya.

The hon. Gentleman knows that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is considering the question of kidnap insurance. Several insurance companies in Britain and other countries supply kidnap insurance. We have to consider the matter on a rather more unilateral basis.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I welcome the economic declaration which discusses the international debt problem and my right hon. Friend's mention of that problem in her statement. Was consideration given at Tokyo to any specific initiative in relation to the deterioriating debt-export ratio of some developing countries, which are particularly dependent on the export of oil or other commodities?

The Prime Minister: No, we did not go beyond the previous ways of dealing with international debt, which are on a case-by-case basis. We are aware that, whereas for some countries a falling oil price has been very helpful in enabling them to meet their debt obligations, there are countries where it has been very damaging and those countries may need more help to meet their debts. My hon. Friend will be aware of the Baker initiative in Seoul.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Why is the right hon. Lady so sensitive about the accusation that she turns a blind eye to terrorist methods when they are used against the Government of Nicaragua? Did she insist on discussing that matter with President Reagan, who is, in fact, engaged in supporting terrorist action against the Government of Nicaragua? Strong support is given in the communiqué on terrorism, which she praises so highly, to the demand that action should be taken, especially through the United Nations. Does that mean that she and President Reagan have now repented for the raid on Tripoli which was made in defiance of, and certainly not in concert with, the United Nations?

The Prime Minister: With regard to Nicaragua, I made it perfectly clear that Foreign Ministers and we support the Contadora process. With regard to terrorism and the action of the United Nations, the right hon. Gentleman will be aware of the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and the statement from the Security Council which all condemn terrorism most vigorously. The right hon. Gentleman will also be aware that the United Nations is not a body which can take or has taken any effective action in that regard.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us welcome the inclusion of the problem of drug abuse on the summit agenda again this year? Is she aware that since the previous summit conditions are still very bad and the younger generation of this country are probably as much at risk, if not more than last year, and that there is still a great deal to be done?

The Prime Minister: As a result of the action at the previous summit, we have received a report on drugs during the year. My hon. Friend is aware that we are taking action in our own countries. He will know what is being done here, and I am sure that he will applaud it and the work of the Home Office. We are also taking international action to see whether we can obtain intelligence of cargoes that would be coming to this country. We have a number of Customs officers in other locations in the world where drugs are produced, and that is proving very effective. My hon. Friend will also know that many drugs have been seized at London airport. I do not say that complacently because we must continue with our plans and activities most vigorously because this is a terrible trade.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Did the Prime Minister find any support at the summit for the view that the risk of a single accident in a century at a nuclear power station, with all its alarming consequences—a risk which is obviously very high — removes all justification for the use of nuclear power?

The Prime Minister: No. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman or any other hon. Member can do other than accept the fact that in this country civil nuclear power has an excellent record. There has been no fatal accident. It is a vigorous industry and, provided that we keep up our careful monitoring of design, manufacture, operational work and maintenance and our excellent nuclear inspectorate, we can continue to have confidence in that industry, which was born in this country.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the general welcome for the statement about co-operation in relation to international terrorism? Does she agree that had she not taken the action to support the Americans in their moves against Libya the present

[Mr. Nicholas Baker]

international agreement about international terrorism, limited but welcome though it is, is unlikely to have been made?

The Prime Minister: Had we left things as they were with the proposed statement at the beginning, it would have been grossly inadequate and it would have been seen to have been grossly inadequate. We felt that it was important that we should take more peaceful ways to try to combat terrorism and that we should enumerate those, not just have a general statement, and that we should be seen to be prepared to take further measures. It was as a result of the action of this country that we got that statement in the end from a totally united set of summit countries.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does not the Prime Minister think that many in the House will find it surprising that there was no indication in her statement that the problems of world hunger and development had been discussed, let alone any positive action proposed to alleviate the hunger of one starving child? Does she not think that, whatever other important matters should appear on the agenda at such meetings, the fundamental problems of world hunger and development should appear automatically when the leaders of the world's richest nations meet?

The Prime Minister: Yes. If the hon. Gentleman looks through the economic communiqúe he will find the matter referred to. He will find Africa singled out for special attention, as he would expect, and he will also find that we discussed the replenishment of the IDA funds which are at present under consideration. The hon. Gentleman will not find a particular sum mentioned except that we agree that there must be a substantial replenishment. He will know that this country is prepared to play its full part in that and I believe that other summit countries will do the same.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall allow a further five minutes for questions, then we must move on.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her achievements at the summit. However, was she not somewhat dismayed by how difficult it proved to be to persuade the French President to agree to the robust wording of the communiqúe on terrorism? Did she notice the admiring published comment of the United States Secretary of State in that context? He said:

"Margaret really wrestled Old Francois to the mat on this one."

Will that sort of wrestling have to continue in order to keep the EEC sound on terrorism?

The Prime Minister: I deny that absolutely. It was realised that we took a robust line on terrorism and on enumerating and detailing more peaceful measures, and that was right. Gradually other summit countries came along and we added further things to the communiqúe. In the end, we had considerable co-operation from all summit countries and the entire communiqúe was agreed.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Will the Prime Minister tell the House whether, as a result of her economic discussions, she is to be allowed to lift the pressure of economic terrorism perpetrated against New Zealand because of its refusal to have nuclear weapons within its waters?

The Prime Minister: We have difficulty with our naval ships entering New Zealand ports because of conditions it has laid down. The Prime Minister of New Zealand is very much aware of that. I have also told the Prime Minister of New Zealand that we shall continue to fight in this country for a fair deal for New Zealand in the Community because we know very well that many of its products, especially lamb and butter, are vital to the future of its economy.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Since point 9 of the official communiqué committed the summit leaders to maintain and, where appropriate, expand official financial flows to the developing countries, what consequences for United Kingdom policy does my right hon. Friend see flowing from that commitment?

The Prime Minister: When my hon. Friend asked that queston it so happened that I had the economic communiqué open at that page. It says that private financial flows will continue to play a major part in providing for their development needs. That is correct, and my hon. Friend is aware that we have constantly emphasised that such financial flows are very valuable to the developing countries. We also insist that in the GATT trade round we must consider the rules for direct foreign investment in other countries as that can be very helpful to those countries. We also hope that the private financial flows from this country, which fell a little last year, will increase once again.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Prime Minister aware that, by and large, the British people will see through the hypocrisy of the so-called statement against terrorism, robust though she declares it to be, in the absence of any action to be taken by the Government against the British banks trading with Libya? Did she, for instance, put forward a simple proposition that, in order to combat terrorism, she would be calling upon all the Tory Members who hold directorships with companies trading with Libya to give up those directorships? Did she say, for instance, that she had sent a letter to the chairman of the Tory party telling him that, if money for Tory party funds was received from companies that are trading with Libya, it should be sent back? Unless she does things such as that, the British people will see through the hypocrisy and understand that this Prime Minister is more concerned with making profit and less concerned with the lives of innocent men, women and children in Libya or elsewhere.

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will recall the actions of the NUM in trying to get help from Libya.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): In view of the specific nature of some of the decisions made, is not a weakness of the summit system the fact that there is no continuing organisation to implement decisions? After all, is it good enough that there should be meetings at intervals but nothing in between to ensure that the decisions are carried out, co-ordinated and monitored?

The Prime Minister: I am aware of the point that my hon. Friend raises. We attempted to do something about it in relation to the economic side of summit life. He will see from the communiqué that in certain circumstances the

five nations that call themselves G5 are to meet at all seven summit countries — which call themselves G7 — on economic and exchange matters. I believe that that is a great improvement that will help. We are also aware that it would be advisable if from time to time in the interim the Foreign Ministers met, because this is one of the few organisations that girdles the world in its membership.

Business of the House

4.21 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I should like, Mr. Speaker, to make a statement about the business for next week:

MONDAY 12 MAY — Until seven o'clock private Members' motions.

Motion for the Spring Adjournment.

TUESDAY 13 MAY—There will be a debate on civil nuclear matters. The debate will arise on a motion which will invite the House to approve the Government's first stage response to the first report of the Select Committee on the Environment 1985-86 on Radioactve Waste (HoC Paper No. 191).

Motion on the Hong Kong (British Nationality) Order.

WEDNESDAY 14 MAY—Progress on remaining stages of the Wages Bill.

There will be a debate on EC documents relating to equal treatment for men and women. Details of the documents concerned will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 15 MAY—Conclusion of remaining stages of the Wages Bill.

FRIDAY 16 MAY—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 19 MAY—Progress on remaining stages of the Social Security Bill (1st Allotted Day).

The House will wish to know, Mr. Speaker, that it will be proposed that the House should rise for the Spring Adjournment on Friday 23 May until Tuesday 3 June.

[Debate on Wednesday 14 May

Relevant European Documents

(a) 6871/83	*Social security schemes: equal treatment for men and women*
(b) 5825/1/84	*Equal treatment for men and women in self-employed occupations*
(c) 4118/86	*Equal opportunities for women*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 78–xi (1983-84) para 1

(b) HC 78–xxxii (1983-84), para 1

(c) HC 21–xii (1985-86), para 2]

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that statement. I also thank him for responding to my request last week for an early debate on civil nuclear matters. In view of the recently increased possibility of a decision by the United States Administration that would allow the deployment of United States' binary chemical weapons in Britain, will the Leader of the House allocate Government time soon so that the House can debate the matter fully before any final decision is taken?

In view of the fact that the major anxieties facing the arts following the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties have still not been resolved, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that a full day's debate on the arts is provided as soon as possible?

Last week, the right hon. Gentleman recognised the need for a wide-ranging debate on foreign affairs. That need increases—indeed, intensifies—when we hear, as we did this afternoon, that the Prime Minister apparently believes that the Contra terrorists, with President Reagan's support, are killing innocent adults and children in central America in order to save Nicaragua for democracy. If it is not possible before the Whitsun recess to have a debate

[Mr. Neil Kinnock]

on foreign affairs, can the Leader of the House give a guarantee that such a debate will be held as soon as possible after the House resumes on 3 June? Will he also ensure that it will be a two-day debate, as a large number of issues need to be attended to?

I have no doubt that the right hon. Gentleman will join me in expressing sorrow at the death of Manny Shinwell. It can truly be said that Manny used the House of Commons in the most robust fashion and that he enhanced its standing as the democratic forum of the nation. I am sure that the whole House will join me in paying tribute to Manny and to his remarkable parliamentary career in both Houses of Parliament. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Mr. Biffen: I thank the right hon. Gentleman particularly for his remarks about Emmanuel Shinwell. I counted it a very great privilege to have been in this House for a period during which I shared common membership with him. He was one of those compelling characters who combined a good appetite for both dissent and loyalty. That made him a person of great distinction within the Labour movement, and I am happy to pay my respects across the Floor of the House. In so doing, I believe that I communicate the respects of all quarters.

I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his comments about the nuclear debate that we have arranged. I note what he said about prospective developments in American defence policy in relation to chemical weapons, and I shall bear that in mind. Obviously, we can consider this through the usual channels, but perhaps it might also be related to the debate that we shall have in due course on the defence White Paper, once we have had the opportunity of considering the observations of the Select Committee.

Again through the usual channels, perhaps we can consider the arts as a topic for a debate, but in the meantime I remind the right hon. Gentleman that there will be arts questions on Monday.

I accept, as I do every week, the great and compelling need for a debate on foreign affairs. I realise that the right hon. Gentleman is raising the ante somewhat by suggesting a two-day debate. Let us look at the matter through the usual channels to see whether it can be arranged at a time that is to the general convenience of the House.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): What will be the motion for the debate on civil nuclear matters? Will it enable hon. Members to raise the need for an international standard of safety in civil nuclear installations, bearing in mind the very serious disparity between safety standards in this country and those at Chernobyl? Is not it absurd that we can have such high safety standards in this country and that the population can still be threatened by the sort of tragedy that has happened at Chernobyl?

Mr. Biffen: I very much hope that the motion can be tabled shortly, and the intention is that it should be drawn most widely indeed in view of recent circumstances. It would not be appropriate for me to anticipate what would or would not be in order, but I do not think that my hon. Friend will be disappointed when he sees the terms of the motion.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): On Tuesday, will arrangements be made to ensure that there is adequate time to debate the Hong Kong order?

Mr. Biffen: At present, the motion would mean a one-and-a-half hour debate, but if there is concern to have the matter reconsidered through the usual channels, we would be prepared to accept that.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): With regard to the report of the Privileges Committee on the complaint by the Select Committee on the Environment, can my right hon. Friend indicate when this matter might be debated in the House?

Mr. Biffen: I underline what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said—that in every sense this is a straightforward House of Commons occasion. None the less, I think that the House would like to have this matter resolved fairly speedily, and I hope that a debate can be arranged before we go into the Whitsun recess.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Will the Leader of the House consider regional policy for the north-east, bearing in mind the Government's appalling record of neglect in that region and the need to protect workers in factories where the management obtain some regional aid and then disappear, leaving many workers unpaid and without apparent legal remedies through the absence of a receivership?

Is he aware, for example, that a firm called Para-pace Ltd., of Cramlington in my constituency, has had 40 workers left high and dry by a management which has done a moonlight flit, and there is no remedy that the Department of Trade and Industry can offer to these workers because there has been no receivership? They are all owed money and can do nothing about it. Will the right hon. Gentleman seriously look at the question of regional aid in the north-east?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that there is a debate on one aspect of regional policy next week, although I do not think that it will help the particular point that he has in mind. What I would like to suggest, therefore, is that he use his chance in the motion that we will be debating on Monday for the Spring Adjournment.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My right hon. Friend will have heard the discussions on tourism during Prime Minister's questions and will be aware of the importance that the Prime Minister attaches to the job creation prospects for that industry. He will also be aware of the very grave concern recently expressed over the loss of tourists this year, due largely to misapprehensions. My right hon. Friend will be aware that the tourism industry has been the subject of only one debate in the entire life of this Parliament.

In view of recent developments, will my right hon. Friend seek time for a Government debate on this subject as soon as possible?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a very precise point, but I am, by the nature of my task, an unyielding creature. I have, therefore, to say to him that, in the circumstances, he too might like to come along on Monday night when we have the recess Adjournment.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): When the House comes to debate the report of the Privileges Committee,

in which, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, I was the one dissenting voice, will he please assure us that there will be an absolutely free vote and that no Government Back Benchers will be under any pressure whatever to suspend membership or lobby rights from the journalist concerned, when the offence for which he was charged was that he made available information about nuclear safety at a time when the Government and others are boasting about the high levels of openness that we now enjoy? Although I have no time for News International or its proprietor, the issue in this case is one that the House must be able to discuss absolutely free of any Government Whips.

Mr. Biffen: I agree that it would be trivialising this particular topic if it were related to News International or its proprietor, and I am grateful that the right hon. Gentleman has made that point. The Prime Minister has said that this is, in every sense, a House of Commons occasion, and I think the right hon. Gentleman should make a generous interpretation of that.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. Friend will be familiar with the reply of 6 May, as reported in column *95* of *Hansard*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) on the European Community budget and contributions thereto. Does my right hon. Friend conclude from this reply that we are to have a European Community supplementary budget every year? Can he assure the House that if and when we are asked to approve supplementary budgets in the European Community the House will be allowed to separate out those elements in the budget which refer to the United Kingdom's rebate, on the one hand, and those elements that may consist simply of increased European Community expenditure, on the other? Can he indicate that we will be able to make a selective choice of what we approve of in the Community and will not be expected to link one unnecessarily with the other?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend raises again the matter touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) last week. It is of some complexity. I would very much like to be able to write to my hon. Friend on this point and set out the record as I feel it should be.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): While we welcome the fact that statements have been made this week by Ministers on developments following the Chernobyl disaster, and in spite of the fact that we are to have a general debate on civil nuclear power next week, will the Leader of the House give an assurance that in case of any new developments arising out of that disaster in particular Ministers will be equally willing to come to the House and make further statements?

Mr. Biffen: I willingly give that undertaking. The House has a responsible role in damping down any kind of popular scaremongering in these matters.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I wonder whether my right hon. Friend heard the one o'clock news and the "World at One" programme. If so, he would have heard the chairman of the Channel Tunnel group, Lord Pennock, talking of Parliament "mucking about" the Channel Tunnel Bill. I am a supporter of the Bill but I am also a great supporter of the parliamentary system. I rather resent the attitude of someone who is not a Member and who speaks of Parliament mucking about as it proceeds to examine a Bill of this nature. Can my right hon. Friend assure me that the procedures of the House with regard to this hybrid Bill will not be telescoped to suit the Government's purpose and thereby put in jeopardy the right of the people of Kent to have their voice heard and their views taken into account in the consideration of this Bill?

Mr. Biffen: If Lord Pennock has referred to Parliament as "mucking about"—I did not have the advantage of hearing the broadcast—the fact is that Lord Pennock is a member of another place and should show the due hypocritical regard that we all expect of one another as politicians. On the wider issue, I understand the concern that there should be a full and fair discussion of the subject.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Without condoning the activities of News International, can I put it to the Leader of the House that the public will condemn the House if it takes the irresponsible action of expelling *The Times* journalist, Mr. Richard Evans, particularly when all he did was report on a conversation that he had had with a Member who himself had breached privilege? Would not Fleet street be wise, in the event that such an expulsion were to take place, to withdraw its lobby correspondents in protest?

Mr. Biffen: That was a very interesting contribution. It helps to indicate that we shall have quite a lively debate when the report of the Privileges Committee is placed before the House. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for having given a trailer of his intended contribution.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Would my right hon. Friend agree that it might be helpful to have a debate on the events outside the News International plant at Wapping, particularly bearing in mind that it would give the Leader of the Opposition the opportunity completely to condemn and refute the remarks of his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who said that the police represent all that is rotten in our society?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has indicated to the House that he would seek to use today's debate to discuss this matter and, as I think that he is the star of the drama, my hon. Friend will have to take advantage of today's debate because I can see no other opportunity in the near future.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Energy to make a statement to the House as soon as possible about the system by which firms which award major onshore contracts for offshore oil-related facilities, such as fabricated jackets, can subcontract a great percentage of that work abroad? I ask this for constituency reasons. In the Highlands we have two yards competing for the Shell Eider contract. One will be successful and the other will lose. Whichever is successful, we shall see up to 50 per cent. of the work subcontracted abroad. This will be very damaging. Could the Leader of the House take steps for the House to have a statement on this so that Members may express their views?

May I add my voice to those who call for an early debate on the report of the Committee of Privileges? In a week in which we have rightly criticised the Soviet Union for secrecy, it would be a travesty if the mother of

[Mr. Charles Kennedy]

Parliaments, in its attitude to Mr. Richard Evans doing his job as a lobby correspondent, were to take an equally ham-fisted approach.

Mr. Biffen: On the second point, I have indicated that it is my expectation that the debate can take place before we go into recess for the Whitsun break. It could hardly be much earlier than that. As to the first point, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy is top for questions on Monday, but that may not be the ideal forum for him to make his point. I will, therefore, refer to my right hon. Friend his request for a statement.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Without wishing to intrude into, or remind my right hon. Friend of, recent Government grief, especially as the Home Secretary is on the Front Bench, may I draw to the attention of the Leader of the House the fact that on Tuesday of next week my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) will move a ten-minute Bill whose purpose is to amend the Shops Act 1950? Can my right hon. Friend assure me that he will allow a free vote and encourage those on the Front Bench to vote for the Bill? Will he also arrange that it should have a fair wind? Will he promise to give it Government Committee time?

Mr. Biffen: The business about voting is a somewhat arcane subject, which is entirely within the keep of my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary. I should be raising substantially false hopes if at this stage of the Session I were to suggest that there would be a great deal of Government time available to facilitate private Members' legislation.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Leader of the House aware that within a few weeks more than 1,000 tin miners in the south-west will be thrown out of their jobs? Reference has been made to their plight by some of his hon. Friends and by a couple of Liberal Members. Does the Leader of the House agree that we should have a debate about the matter and that the tin miners might be treated in the same way that the Tory Government have treated Johnson Matthey, by the use of taxpayers' money, in the same way that they bailed out the Common Market, with £250 million of taxpayers' money, and in the same way as they bailed out the Export Credits Guarantee Department last year with another £350 million? Many businesses will go under because of the closure of the tin mines. Does he agree that that will cause havoc in the south-west and will affect the lives of the families in that area? Will he arrange a debate before those 1,000-odd tin miners finally have to join the dole queue, although some have probably taken redundancy already? Does he also recall that a few weeks ago——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Skinner: This is only a small point. Does the Leader of the House recall that a few weeks ago I mentioned to him that the branch secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union in this building has to come to work two or three hours before the beginning of the afternoon shift so that he can carry out his trade union duties? Why should he have to do that when the other trade union branch secretaries representing the clerical staffs can do their job in a different way? Will the Leader of the House make arrangements for that man, who works on the lifts, to be given the same opportunity to do his trade union job while at work as applies to the others?

Mr. Biffen: On the second point, it probably belongs to the House of Commons Commission, but I shall have the matter considered.

On the first point, I share the hon. Member's concern about the tragedies that are implicit in the misfortunes of the tin industry in the south-west. That is natural since I was raised in the south-west. However, the question of a debate should turn upon the fact that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry has produced a report on the tin crisis which the Government are considering. I think that a debate should properly proceed when the Government's response has been published.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I revert to the Channel Tunnel Bill. Now that my right hon. Friend has heard the stern warning issued by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) about the dangers of trying to telescope the timetable for the Bill, now that Lord Pennock has made such an interesting contribution on the subject of how to win friends and influence people by telling the House to stop mucking about with the Bill, and now that the House has had to pass a special resolution setting up an unprecedented series of hearings by the Select Committee on Standing Orders in order to decide whether the Government should be granted the dispensation which they have requested, does not my right hon. Friend think that he may have been a little dismissive in his reply at this time last week when I issued a warning on the subject? Does he not understand now that the people of Kent want fair play and a fair hearing on the Bill? As there are a hundred legislative obstacles in their way, the Government will trip on every one until they start to see sense on the matter.

Mr. Biffen: I thank my hon. Friend for his good-natured comments. Being dismissive is not a characteristic that I usually permit myself; inwardly I might, but at this Box I try to accommodate the public stance. Certainly I was not dismissive but perhaps optimistic. I take account of what my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) have said, but I am sure that they are well aware that this is a major matter that engages the attention of the Government and that it will be dealt with properly and without any attempt to deny legitimate debate.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): It is now nearly two months since the Budget and the publication of the Government's Green Paper on personal tax reform. Since that subject is likely to play an important part in the Conservative party's position at the next election, could my right hon. Friend use his great influence with the Treasury and other relevant Departments to ensure that we have a full debate on this important subject in the near future so that on this occasion all parliamentarians may make their views known before final decisions are taken?

Mr. Biffen: Of course, I shall take account of what my hon. Friend has said. Being a fair-minded person, he will also recognise that this is the time of the year when we have a great deal of legislative business—Report stages and the like. That makes it very difficult to give a clear commitment such as he wants on the topic.

BILL PRESENTED

EDUCATION (No. 2)

Secretary Sir Keith Joseph, supported by Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Chris Patten, and Mr. George Walden, presented (Under Standing Order No. 111 (Procedure upon Bills whose main object is to create a charge upon the public revenue)) a Bill to provide for the making of grants by the Secretary of State to the Fellowship of Engineering and the Further Education Unit and to make further provision in relation to the arrangements under Part VI of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 for the pooling of expenditure by local authorities on education, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 158.]

Crime Prevention

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

4.47 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Crime and the fear of crime are of deep concern to many, perhaps all, of our constituents. I hope, therefore, that the House will welcome this chance to discuss crime prevention. Of course, crime prevention cannot replace the police or the processes of justice. But if we make good use of our opportunities it can make the lives and property of our constituents more secure and help to relieve their anxieties.

Recorded crime in Britain has risen relentlessly for more than 30 years. This is a trend common throughout the Western world. I stress the word "recorded" because with more telephones, more police on the streets and greater use of insurance, the proportion of crimes notified to the police would seem to have risen substantially over the years. This is confirmed by the British crime survey. It means that the actual increase in crime is less than the recorded figures suggest because the proportion of recorded crime has increased. But however one looks at the facts and figures, the reality is bleak and the effort required is great.

The figures show that the vast majority, or some 95 per cent., of offences are against property. Some 81 per cent. of all recorded crime is acquisitive. Much of this is opportunist, and a substantial proportion is made easier by carelessness. That is why the Government have encouraged a wider debate about how we as a society can tackle crime before it happens. Crime prevention should be the starting point of a well-founded law and order policy because it is a good practical first response to the concerns of the community.

One in five car owners still regularly leaves the vehicle unlocked. Only one in 10 homes has what the police regard as good security arrangements—mortice locks on doors and window locks on at least downstairs windows. Some 80 per cent. of theft of and from cars is estimated to be opportunist. More than a quarter of burglaries do not involve forced entry because a door or window is open. Most of us still make it too easy for crime to be committed.

I shall run briefly through our various initiatives, touch on one or two broader considerations and, finally, talk a little about the creation of a climate of opinion which rejects crime and lawlessness.

The most visible means of preventing crime is the police service. We have shown our commitment to it by increasing expenditure in real terms by more than a third, and by providing additional manpower of some 14,500. That has contributed to putting more officers back on the beat, to building closer links between the police and the community, and to many forces being able to put more resources into crime prevention initiatives. The stimulating diversity which we get by having 43 different police forces shines through, particularly in crime prevention. When I visit different forces I almost always hear of some fresh local thinking and some new local initiatives. Obviously, we need to spread good practice and to marry those initiatives together. That is a reason why my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks

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(Mr. Brittan) set up the crime prevention unit, which is at the centre of the web of initiatives which I shall outline this afternoon.

Police training is crucial, both for those who specialise in crime prevention work and for others. A joint working party of the Home Office and the police has recently produced a report, recommending a much expanded role for our Home Office crime prevention centre, which is based at Stafford. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office and I have accepted those recommendations and are considering how to take them forward. Today I can announce that I have decided that the post of director of the crime prevention centre should be upgraded from the rank of chief superintendent to that of assistant chief constable.

Two initiatives being pursued throughout the country are property marking schemes and neighbourhood or home watch. Neighbourhood watch has caught the public imagination. There are more than 9,500 such schemes now working in England and Wales—a figure which has nearly trebled in just over a year. That is striking and significant. This is a voluntary partnership between the police and the community against crime such as we have been unable to mobilise previously. It is not imposed by Whitehall. It springs up spontaneously from the neighbourhood. Its strength stems from its ability to bring together good physical security to protect homes and an element of watchfulness. Such schemes help to bring communities together, and they build up attitudes and habits hostile to crime. We shall ensure that the momentum is sustained.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend be interested to know that during the past three years in the Norbury area of Croydon the number of neighbourhood watch schemes has almost trebled? It is no accident that during the same period the number of burglaries has fallen dramatically.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that illustration of the point that I seek to make. A London Member in particular would emphasise that neighbourhood watch works only where there is close police involvement, and that that requires policemen, sometimes more policemen than are at present available. I accept that there have been difficulties in establishing neighbourhood watch in parts of some of our cities, partly for that reason. However, I hope that those difficulties can be overcome, because it is in such areas that the schemes are needed most as crime is at its highest.

I can add to my hon. Friend's illustration of the success of the schemes when they are well thought out and properly established. On the Davis estate in Chatham—I visited the town recently—the scheme attracted support from 90 per cent. of the 1,250 dwellings, and crime is reported to have fallen by 50 per cent. during the first nine months of its operation. Soundly based schemes can help people to cope with problems, such as the fear of crime, and can reduce their sense of powerlessness at being unable to do anything about it.

Last October, I announced the establishment of five local crime prevention projects in Croydon, Wellingborough, Swansea, Bolton and north Tyneside. In each a locally led steering group is developing a crime profile of the area's problems and a range of specially tailored crime prevention measures.

Last month, I visited the north Tyneside project and was much impressed with what I saw. I hope that the five local programmes will receive support from everyone, regardless of politics. I was sad to see the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young) describe our initiative in Bolton as being "a load of codswallop". I think he is a little out of date, and does not realise that the party line has changed. His attitude is not typical of the local authorities and voluntary groups in the areas concerned, and I hope that their enthusiasm will help to win him round.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the people of Bolton are extremely grateful that Bolton has been selected for the crime prevention initiative, that the director of the initiative has now taken up his post, and that there are high hopes of its considerable contribution to the fight against crime in the town?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend's zeal in this matter has been extremely encouraging to me from the beginning. I hope that, regardless of party, the citizens of Bolton will rally round the initiative.

Local authorities can make a major contribution to crime prevention. We have just sent chief constables and local authority chief executives a dossier produced by the Home Office, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives. It summarises a wide range of information on good practice, and gives examples of crime prevention work which is proving its worth. In the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, where my Conservative colleagues deserve, on their record, to hold control today—I am glad that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) is present and not doing mischief at the polling station—a booklet giving sound practical advice on crime prevention has been distributed free of charge to some 64,000 residents. The council is helping tenants through the provision of grants for security purposes.

In some areas, far from receiving support and co-operation, the police have experienced consistent hostility and obstruction in introducing crime prevention initiatives. In some areas where the police and the community have tried to work out a scheme, councils have refused permission for the erection of neighbourhood watch signs. When the police have sought to talk to young people in schools about issues, such as road safety, drugs and crime prevention, some schools have prevented them and echoed the anti-police stances of a number of hard Left local authorities.

The potential of police work in schools has been shown clearly in Avon and Somerset, where the police have one officer permanently seconded to one of two schools in the St. Pauls area of Bristol. In one of those schools a reduction of 50 per cent. in referrals to the juvenile bureau has been achieved.

Significant resources are coming from central Government to fund crime prevention schemes. As a result of the expansion of the community programme, there are now 5,087 places approved. Of those, 4,000 have been filled, involving 134 crime prevention projects around the country.

In the Consett and Stanley areas of Derwentside, a scheme established in January employs a team of 13 to disseminate advice to the community, particularly to the elderly. The team, under the community programme, has fitted more than 350 window locks and 50 door chains. A scheme in Kirkby on Merseyside provides a 24-hour door porter service at a tower block. The efforts of the team of 15 have largely eliminated criminal damage there. Some £18 million is being provided for crime prevention through the community programme and in addition under the urban programme £6 million is available for the prevention or the alleviation of crime.

We are concerned that everyone, regardless of income, should be protected against crime. Local authorities can use the housing investment resources available to them for crime prevention and security measures. This is one of the features that the Department of the Environment's urban housing renewal unit is considering when allocating the £50 million of resources that it has for projects to improve local authority estates. I think that the House would agree that grants of this type, if they are to be cost effective, should be properly targeted. I notice that the Opposition have recently produced, in a bit of a hurry, some as yet unspecific and uncosted pledges to give everybody home security grants. If the hon. Member for Hammersmith would like to fill in the details of what the Labour party is proposing, I shall gladly get it costed for him. We can add it to the £24 billion of promises already made.

The truth is—this is general thought and advice—that, by pretending to give priority to everything, the Labour party is in effect giving priority to nothing. Any promises connected with law and order have to be judged by the record and by the record, if it ever came to the point, those promises would sink to the bottom of the pile and be quickly forgotten.

Crime prevention thrives on publicity. Many hon. Members will, I hope, be familiar with the Magpies advertising campaign launched under my right hon. Friend's aegis in 1984. The results have been encouraging. One could never prove from the statistics what the direct effect of a campaign like that was. However, domestic burglary in the regions covered by the campaign fell significantly compared with the rest of the country. Therefore, we have extended the campaign to cover Granada, Tyne Tees, Yorkshire, Border, London and Central ITV regions.

I can also announce that, starting now and running through the summer, we are launching a new leaflet and poster campaign targeted against auto crime. Through every police force in England and Wales leaflets will be available at petrol stations, motorway service areas and accessory shops to bring home to motorists what they can —indeed, should—do to reduce the opportunities that they present to thieves.

The House will see that the notion of partnership runs like a thread through crime prevention — partnership between the police and the community, between Government and commerce, between voluntary and statutory agencies and partnership across the political divide. That was a key theme of the seminar on crime prevention that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister held in January. It brought together a wide range of people —industry, trade unions, education, banks, insurance, local government and voluntary groups.

It was rather sour of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in the earlier phase of his approach to the subject to describe this coming together of such a wide range of interests as a publicity stunt and gimmick. Anyone who was there, I think, was struck by the very practical and serious concern about crime and the need for a response by all sections of society. If it is true, as I read from the press, that the right hon. Gentleman and the Opposition are changing their tune about crime prevention, I think that we on this side of the House can very reasonably say, "Welcome aboard; better late than never".

Much work has flowed from the seminar at No. 10. It has been carried forward by many of the organisations that attended. To keep up the momentum, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has invited me to hold a second seminar at 10 Downing street on 23 June to take stock of the progress that has been made. We shall see where any obstacles to progress exist, and consider how to remove them. The scale of the activities already under way is impressive.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I am getting a little tired of the right hon. Gentleman's rhetoric, because we were in the crime prevention argument long before he was, and have the documents to prove it. More importantly, will the right hon. Gentleman be going to that second seminar with the intention of asking the Prime Minister for the money that even they in the document produced before December agreed was necessary to target-harden the 1·25 million vulnerable properties in the country?

Mr. Hurd: I have listed all the different areas from which crime prevention schemes can draw their resources from the taxpayer. I have also dealt with the suggestion that everybody — duke or dustman — should get a handout from the Government, regardless of need, practicality or expense, to make their homes safer. I leave the House to judge between those two approaches. Our approach, which involves substantial sums of public money but is carefully worked out and targeted, is very much preferable to what we have so far heard—the hon. Gentleman may be able to refine it — from the Opposition.

I was going to refer to the overall direction of this multitude of efforts, mainly spontaneous, but obviously requiring some co-ordination so that good practice can be spread. My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw) has taken the chair at a newly-established ministerial group on crime prevention which consists of Ministers and officials from 12 Government Departments. It has been established for just about a month, and has already held two good meetings.

I accept, of course, that the main work going on in this field so far has been on the easier side of the crime question. Violent crime accounts for only some 3 per cent. of total offences, but it is violent crime that causes the greatest public concern.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend agree that the banning or licensing of the sale of crossbows would have a great effect on the prevention of violent crime?

Mr. Hurd: We are looking at crossbows and airguns because the two have some similarities. They both have quite legitimate followers. Crossbows, as my hon. Friend probably knows, are used in a growing number of perfectly legitimate sporting clubs. I am anxious to find an answer

[Mr. Hurd]

to this which does not involve the police in a whole new layer of bureaucracy through a licensing system but which meets the concern that my hon. Friend is not alone in expressing. We are, as it were, looking at this from the beginning, and it will not be long before we can reach some conclusion.

The clear-up rates for offences of violence against the person and sexual offences remain high, I am glad to say, at 73 per cent. and 72 per cent. respectively. I acknowledge that we have a long way to go before our crime prevention strategy is sufficiently developed to deal with crimes of violence. Much of the action is under way. For example, in designing estates, architects and developers need to consider, among other things, the security of those who will live there. They have to avoid, for example, creating great pools of darkness and opportunities for crime as a result of the street lighting being in the wrong place.

A study in Newcastle has shown that phasing pub closing hours and making more transport available at the crucial time when they close in itself can reduce the violence in city centres. The Department of Transport is about to produce proposals on measures to prevent assaults on bus crews. At the Prime Minister's seminar the unions concerned were particularly anxious to emphasise that point to us. Good progress is being made with a study of crime on the London Underground. A team drawn from the Department of Transport, London Regional Transport, the Home Office, British Transport police and the Metropolitan police are looking at it.

Other initiatives in this area of violent crime will be developed throught the working groups chaired by people from outside the realms of officialdom. They are studying commercial robbery and violence associated with pubs, and will report later this year. I list these as important contributions, although I accept that they are only a beginning. Crime will not be beaten by rhetoric, and neither my predecessor nor I has ever pretended otherwise. It will be edged back only by a considered and comprehensive strategy. The other elements of that strategy — the police, the powers of the courts, the prisons and victim support — will be covered in the House on other days, and I will not go into those in detail.

I should like to stress the broad scope of work needed if crime prevention is to be effective. We must concentrate not just on fear of the law but on the strength of the values and standards of behaviour that hold society together. Crime prevention is about a lot more than locks and bolts.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On the subject of victim support, is the Home Secretary satisfied with the progress that is being made in the criminal investigation of rape, particularly the interviewing of the victims by police officers?

Mr. Hurd: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the police have given a great deal of thought to that. In the Metropolitan area, where the problem is deepest, they have transformed the way in which they interview rape victims. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that, while that transformation may increase the number of rapes recorded by the police, it will transform the willingness of victims to come forward and, therefore, the ability of the police to catch rapists. I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The psychological approach of the police to the rape victim has turned out to be of crucial importance. The police realise that and have been adapting their approach accordingly.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Will my right hon. Friend refer to the anonymity of the rapist? Has the Home Office now agreed to bring forward legislation to remove that anonymity?

Mr. Hurd: We are still considering exactly how to do that. The exchanges in the House in the past on that point showed that, on the whole, the House felt that a mistake had been made in earlier legislation which should be corrected. I should prefer it if my hon. Friend did not press that point today. I shall make sure that, before long, the House is informed of how we mean to proceed.

No Government have the power to defeat crime singlehanded. We can ensure that the various parts of the criminal justice system are in good repair and well resourced. We have a duty to seek to create a climate that rejects crime and in which individual discipline and responsibility are emphasised. That duty is shared by everyone in the House and by all responsible politicians. That leads me to a matter which I know some right hon. and hon. Members want to raise during the debate.

The responsibility for creating a climate that rejects violence extends to offences committed in situations of mass disorder. There have been a number of occasions in recent years when industrial disputes have degenerated into disorder. The miners' strike provides an example. More recently, there has been and continues to be the dispute at Wapping. Over 350,000 police man hours have been absorbed at Wapping. Last Saturday over 1,700 police officers had to be made available. Police operations on that scale inevitably affect the service that the police are able to provide elsewhere.

We all know that passions can run high in industrial disputes. The role of the police is to prevent and deal with breaches of the peace and criminal offences, and to uphold the rights and safety of those threatened by intimidation. They are not there to take one side or the other in an industrial dispute. The Metropolitan police are neither pro-Murdoch nor anti-Murdoch. It is not their job to be either. If complaints are made against the police, Parliament has provided the means for those complaints to be investigated and dealt with.

Several distingushed Labour Members from the trade union group of Members of Parliament came to see me three weeks ago about the police operation at Wapping. We had a good discussion, and they presented their concerns in a balanced way. I pursued their concerns with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and on 2 May wrote to the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), who led that delegation. I have told him of my intention, in view of the public interest, to put a copy of my reply in the Library, because the letter gives a clear analysis of how the commissioner told me he is handling the police operation and the pattern of response to violence that he believes is necessary. It is right for police action to come under careful scrutiny in that way. However, phrases that I have read in the past few days such as "police riot" or, as one hon. Member did outside the House, accusing the police of being

"all that is rotten in our society"

are not only untrue but deeply offensive, not least to the 175 police officers who suffered injuries last Saturday.

It is right for the police to keep their operations under continuing review. It is right for those who have complaints about the actions of police officers to use the remedy that Parliament has provided for that purpose. But it is also right for the trade unions themselves to look again at what is being done in their name. Within the trade union movement there is a long and honourable tradition of peaceful protest and action within the law. No one doubts the strength of feeling of the print workers involved in the dispute with News International. I hope that a settlement of that dispute can soon be reached. But it is clear, and it is not denied, that those demonstrations and pickets are attracting to the scene people who are prepared to resort to violence and who come intending violence. Disorder of the sort that we have seen in recent weeks does no credit to the cause of the print workers. It does not enhance their public support. Therefore, I hope that the union leaders will reconsider their tactics and seek to maintain their arguments and attempts at persuasion in ways that are less likely to cause disorder.

At the request of the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), my hon. Friend the Minister of State met a delegation from the union at the Home Office today. As a result, I understand that there will be a meeting between the print union leaders and the deputy assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan police to discuss the future handling of affairs at Wapping. I welcome that development. It is exactly the way in which those matters should be handled.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): In what I say, I am not seeking to argue the case of what happened on Saturday night from the point of view of someone who was there throughout. The police say that 175 policemen were injured, 1,700 police were involved, there were 10,000 demonstrators, which is generally agreed, and on the other side there were 83 casualties, some of which were serious. That occurred within two miles of the Palace of Westminster. The Home Secretary is the responsible Minister. Will he explain why he did not come at once to the House and make a statement, when he would be held answerable for the actions of the police there? The responsibility rests first with the commissioner and then with the Home Secretary. The right hon. Gentleman abdicated his duty to the police as well as the people of London by failing to make it clear to the House of Commons what, in his opinion, happened, so that hon. Members could say what they had seen on that site that night.

Mr. Hurd: I disagree with the right hon. Gentleman about that. He and I have differing views about how the responsibility for the policing of London should be organised. Although I think the right hon. Gentleman wishes to change it, the present position is that the commissioner has operational independence. I have explained to the House rather carefully this afternoon the steps that I have taken as a result of representations that I have received to satisfy myself about the nature of the policing of the operation.

I have also taken advantage of the fact that the right hon. Gentleman, in an exchange with Mr. Speaker, asked whether it would be in order for him to raise the matter in the debate. That was a useful and entirely proper move on his part. I have tried to respond to it in what I have said. Late yesterday evening, I received from the right hon. Gentleman a list of detailed questions about the injuries sustained by the police at Wapping. I had hoped to have the full answers for the right hon. Gentleman in time for the debate, but the necessary research is still proceeding. I shall let him have those answers as soon as I can.

I believe that the desire to see an improvement in the way in which we deal with crime and law and order is so deep-rooted among our constituents and of such fundamental importance to our society that the greater agreement we can sustain in the House, the better our constituents will be served, provided that that agreement is based on support for a disciplined police force and for the law. I hope very much that, despite the disagreements that will occur from time to time on particular matters, we can keep that aim in view.

The Labour party has not sustained that claim by the way in which its Members have cast their votes on recent legislative proposals such as the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the Public Order Bill or, most important of all, the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984. The Labour party has sought to deprive not just me or the Government but the police of a tool for dealing with terrorism which I regard, unfortunately, as essential. As the right hon. Member for Gorton is not here, I shall refrain from developing that point with illustrations of his recent activities or lack of activities, but I hope that the Labour party will give a clear lead in this matter and will either discipline or disown those within its ranks who continually obstruct and vilify the police, all too often at the ratepayers' expense.

The nation has a right to expect a clear stance on this issue from hon. Members on both sides of the House. All responsible parties in Parliament have a contribution to make to buttressing the rule of law. For our part, we are pursuing and intend to continue an honest, vigorous and coherent policy for the protection of the public, and in this, crime prevention — the main subject of the debate — forms an important part.

5.20 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I regret that the debate was not held a couple of days earlier partly because I could be in Hammersmith getting rid of that wretched combination of Liberals and Tories who have been ripping apart the social fabric of Hammersmith in much the same way as the Government are ripping apart the social fabric of the nation. It would also have given the people an opportunity to judge the Government's words by their actions on crime prevention, but unfortunately the debate will not reach the newspapers until after people have voted. If people wish to do one small thing today to help prevent crime, they could make sure that they vote Labour and do not elect Tory administrations, because the Government have done more to increase the crime rate than any recent Government.

The Government came to office on a "get tough" policy, and they got tough. We send more people to prison than does any other country in western Europe except Turkey. We have more young people in prison than any country in western Europe except Turkey. We now have a faster rising crime rate than we have had for years. In addition, we have had riots in our streets of a nature, frequency and intensity that we have not seen for at least 100 years and probably 150 years. Now we even have riots in prisons. This is supposed to be a successful policy.

[Mr. Clive Soley]

The Government's failure on crime prevention is almost as great as their failure on unemployment. In terms of law and order, they have been disastrous for the British people. We heard the Home Secretary say in his concluding remarks, "Let us keep law and order out of politics." That is an amazing change from 1979, when the Conservative party put full-page advertisements in the newspapers backing the Police Federation and saying that there would be a vote on capital punishment. The previous Home Secretary was not sure whether he was in favour of capital punishment. He wanted to hang terrorists, but no one else. What an abysmal, miserable record. The "get tough", simplistic approach did not work, could not work, and was bound to produce such a disastrous failure because the Government linked it with other deadly policies which ripped apart our social fabric.

Perhaps we should consider why the increase in crime has been so rapid, especially under this Government, but under several Governments in recent years. The first cause, which applies to all Governments since the 1960s, has been the move from the cities back to the country. It would take too long to develop that argument in detail. Anyone who wishes to examine the evidence should read the reports from the metropolitan counties, universities and Government Departments, which show how the move from the inner cities has distorted their population by concentrating there people who are either affluent and tending to move through or those who have severe problems, especially in housing.

Bad housing has much to do with crime, not just because of target hardening but because of the distribution of the population. If people cannot afford to buy and are unable to rent in either the private or public sectors, they are squeezed to the wall in the inner cities. For many years, there has been a major problem in our inner cities, and it would have been a law and order problem for any Government. I absolve the Government, to some extent, in that area, although they have made the position much worse.

The Government have introduced a new factor called economic distress. In even finer terms, it is called mass unemployment and especially youth unemployment. At times of economic distress, people become more authoritarian and more frightened and the community begins to break down. That did not happen in quite the same way in the 1930s for several reasons, which I should be happy to discuss if the Minister wished to pursue it. It has happened dramatically recently in our inner cities and the Goverment made it far worse by pulling off the sticking plaster of public expenditure, which at least gave some opportunity to the community to hold together the community links. The one sure way of preventing crime is to ensure that the community fabric — the links between groups and individuals in the community—is strong, good and growing. That cannot be the case at times of mass unemployment or when the Government are cutting public expenditure, thus aggravating the lack of housing and leisure and educational activities that normally exist in any community.

The Government introduced another all-important factor. They pushed young people, many of whom had been unemployed for many years, on the margins of relevance. The problem for hon. Members on both sides of the House is that many youngsters, black and white, employed and unemployed, consider places such as Parliament to be irrelevant to their needs because we do not address their problems. At times of mass unemployment, they turn to what is called the black economy. I prefer to call it the alternative economy precisely because that is what it is—an alternative to living on the dole. It ranges from doing some work on the side while collecting unemployment benefit to running drugs. The latter is a good way of obtaining money and they can use the drugs to deal with their inner feelings of deprivation, depression and anxiety.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I understand what the hon. Gentleman is trying to say. Can he provide any evidence that those who are unemployed commit more crimes than those who are in work? I have been unable to find that statistical correlation. I do not believe that it exists.

Mr. Soley: There is some evidence of a connection between youth unemployment and crime. It is hard to prove a direct link, and I do not argue that such a direct link exists — *[Interruption.]* If hon. Members would listen, they might understand the force of my argument even if they do not agree with it. I said that long-term youth unemployment pushes young people into activities that are on the margins of the law. That is when they become a problem to the rest of the community in public order terms. If the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) will bear with me for a moment—he will know the direction of my thoughts—he will see what I mean.

In such an explosive atmosphere in our inner cities, all that is needed to trigger anger is insensitive, bad or grossly mistaken policing. The Government have never addressed that problem seriously. Before I mention what we must do about the problem, I wish to discuss policing. The Home Secretary rightly mentioned Wapping. One or two hot-heads in the Conservative party were quick to condemn the demonstrators as a crowd of hooligans. The Home Secretary slipped into the trap of calling it mass disorder when what happened was rather different. It is worth saying to those hot heads on the other side of the House who sought to condemn that, before they condemn, they should talk to people on all sides of the dispute and, if possible, be present at any demonstrations. I recognise that not everyone can be present on such occasions. I have been to the printing plant at Wapping twice. I was there for about six hours three weeks ago. On the night of 3 May, I was there for another six hours. I shall describe my view of the incident.

At 11 pm on Saturday 3 May, at the police station in Leman street, I saw the police video of the outbreak of trouble at Wapping. I met and talked to most of the senior police officers involved. I also saw police, demonstrators and the ambulancemen outside News International between midnight and 4 am. The video showed about six people throwing objects which might have been staves, bricks and smoke bombs, from behind a line of demonstrators. One or two police officers collapsed, possibly as a result of the impact of the missiles or the pressure of the crowd. The police clearly had a problem at that stage. It was then that the mounted police officers charged the crowd. The video did not show what happened afterwards, as the events took place outside the range of the camera.

However, on speaking to police officers, demonstrators, trade union officials and Members of Parliament who were present, I reached the following conclusions: a small number of people, possibly acting together and possibly acting with the intention of making the police attack demonstrators, threw missiles in an attack on the police which caused an immediate and serious public order problem for the police. The action by the police was seen universally as a gross over-reaction by the demonstrators, most of whom felt that they had been attacked and some of whom fought back. If the group of people who threw missiles had the intention of creating hostility between police and demonstrators, they were successful.

The trade union leaders concerned have made it clear that they utterly condemn any missile throwing or attacks on the police. The police stated that the trade union leadership had been very responsible and that the mass of demonstrators — I direct those remaks to the Home Secretary, in view of the words that he chose to use— were exercising their rights peacefully. Once the police charge had taken place, it seems that events got out of control. Officers and demonstrators were fighting and getting injured as a result of the actions of a handful of people who had initiated the trouble.

Once fighting starts, it is difficult to stop it. One police officer described how, even though he was in full uniform and was carrying a stretcher, he was injured by another police officer running back from the crowd in an emotional state and striking him with a truncheon. That is a classic example of the way in which events get out of hand and how the behaviour of individuals can become irrational and dangerous.

We must do everything possible to prevent such an incident from happening again. Although each individual is and must be responsible for his own behaviour, we cannot condemn demonstrators or police officers without taking into account the circumstances at the time.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North) *rose*——

Mr. Soley: In view of those factors, I have, with the full support of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and my right hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary, asked for a meeting with the Home Secretary at which I shall press for a review of the lessons to be learnt and of police tactics. At the very least, there is a case for a warning to be given before a mounted police charge and a need to ensure that any use of riot police is limited to the absolute minimum.

I emphasise that other options were available that night. That is one of the matters that I wish to discuss with the Home Secretary. It has been established that many officers were not wearing numbers on their overalls. The Minister of State, Home Office—the hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw) — is present in the Chamber. When the Public Order Bill was before the House, he indicated that he would ensure that all officers had numbers on their overalls. The problem put to me by the senior officer concerned was that, because many pairs of overalls were handed out at Wapping, numbers could not be put on them. I do not accept that we cannot get around that problem. I give the Minister notice of that point. He may wish to pursue it on a future occasion.

Mr. Wheeler: The hon. Gentleman has given an assessment of events on that unfortunate day, but it seemed to be almost an excuse — I hesitate to say, "justification". Will he say, quite categorically, that he condemns all violence without any excuse at all?

Mr. Soley: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman heard me. I think that he was trying to intervene when I said that each individual is and must be responsible for his own behaviour. We cannot condemn demonstrators or police officers without taking into account the circumstances at the time. I do not have any difficulty in saying to the hon. Gentleman that I condemn the use of violence. What the hon. Gentleman has to take on board is that every human being will resort to violence in certain circumstances. As a former prison governor and magistrate, the hon. Gentleman knows that allowances must be made according to the circumstances at the time. A magistrate is expected to do that. If he did not do so, he would be failing in his job.

If I condemned, as the hon. Gentleman wants me to do, for example, the police officer who hit another police officer during the incident at Wapping, I would be failing to understand the emotional pressure under which that man was at the time. We must understand that. We can say as many times as we like that we condemn violence from wherever it comes. I have no problem in saying that. Unless one tries to understand what happened and tries to prevent it from happening again, one is exercising one's conscience. It is not enough for the hon. Gentleman to do that, because he was not one of those injured. It is cheap to try to pretend that that does not matter; it does, and it makes a world of difference. Let us keep that in perspective when we discuss the issue.

I shall continue to consider the police aspect because it is linked with crime prevention. It is essential to give much more attention to the police than has been given in recent times. The Government have tried to deal with a law and order problem — I use a slightly different phrase from that used by the Prime Minister — by throwing police officers at it. In this country, there is about one police officer for every 394 citizens. Twenty years ago, there was about one police officer for every 602 citizens. Even if 50 per cent. of the population were police officers, the problems would not be solved. We must recognise that there is a crime prevention problem.

Labour Members have been saying for a long time that, for a number of reasons, we want an elected police authority. We believe that it is essential not only to have the police under democratic control—anyone who does not believe in democratic control had better say what he does believe in, because we would have a police state— but to have the police and the local community work closely together to carry out good crime prevention.

Magistrates should not be members of an elected police authority. Magistrates were put on in the first place, 100 years ago, interestingly and relevantly enough, only because the powers that be at the time thought that the elected authority did not have enough political experience. The duty of magistrates is to administer the law. They should not be involved in policing the law and should not be dragged into party political argument on the authority. The authority's duty must be to enforce the law. The minimum standards required would be laid down by the Home Office and there would be a strengthened police inspectorate. That is part of the Labour party's policy. That is a necessary way to go. We also need an independent police complaints authority.

[Mr. Soley]

I would be remiss if I did not give a little more thought than the Home Secretary did to the issue of police training. The right hon. Gentleman touched on the subject briefly. Let us recognise what we are doing. We are recruiting police officers in their teens, at times, giving them about 20 weeks basic training, a year or two's probationary training on the job — as the Home Secretary knows, supervision is very varied — and asking them to police our inner cities. The recruitment pattern shows that about 80 per cent. of the Metropolitan police in London are recruited from outside London. London is not completely untypical of the rest of the country, but the position is probably more severe in London.

Mr. Wheeler: It has always been like that.

Mr. Soley: Of course it has, but that does not make it desirable. We are putting young people with minimal experience and training on the streets of our inner cities in the explosive political and economic atmosphere of our times. That is what is so damaging. That is why I say that, as a minimum, we should aim to increase police training to six months and, eventually, to two years. It is unfair to the police to make them police such areas with only that sort of training.

We need to open up police training so that it takes place not just in police training establishments. Those establishments are important, but, as a number of hon. Members know, and as the Home Secretary probably knows better than most following the Islington case, the problems of police corruption are magnified a hundred times because other police officers cover up for those involved. The public can accept that there are some bad apples in the barrel, but they are right not to accept it when other police officers say nothing about those bad apples, whether it is the bad apple of corruption, of beating people up in the streets, or of racism. We must create in the police force an atmosphere that gives it a high professional status, values and moral standards which will not place the Home Secretary in the invidious position in which he found himself in the Islington case. We can do that partly by changing the nature and extent of police training.

More must be done about community policing. The Home Secretary said that it was necessary to have police officers on the streets, and he was right. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will direct a little more of his attention to the schemes put forward by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and the all-party penal policy group on alternatives such as safe neighbourhood units and priority estate projects. To do that, we need community police officers who stay in the area. The link between an area, the people in it and the elected representatives is vital. At the moment, police officers do not stay in the area because the Government, who are supposed to care so much for police officers, have never thought it necessary, despite the breakdown in law and order in recent years, to negotiate with the Police Federation on the establishment of a proper career structure for community police officers which would give them a financial and professional reward for staying in the job and in that place and for developing the links with the community that are necessary for good crime prevention.

We should consider also the support that we give the police and their families when members of the police force are killed or injured. I am not satisfied at all with the Government's response on the Public Order Bill when they chucked out our amendment which proposed to set up a way to compensate police officers, their relatives and families when police were killed or injured in the course of their duty. The police and their families still have to rely on the complete inadequacy of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and on private insurance.

So much more is linked with the breakdown in law and order under the Government that we could spend a great deal of time considering it, but I must address myself also to crime prevention and to victim support. The Labour party has a long history of supporting crime prevention policies. I should be the first to say that the Labour party has not always described those policies in that way. We have done so only in the past five years. I can say that confidently, because I know, as the former chairman of the Labour Campaign for Criminal Justice, that we were putting forward those policies five years ago. They have been our policies in at least the last two Labour party conferences. I do not want the Home Secretary to pretend that we have stolen his clothes. The previous Home Secretary did nothing about this. He merely boasted about his ability to use the police as a way of enforcing the Government's industrial relations policy, and that is what he did. He left it to this Home Secretary to pick up the bits. The right hon. Gentleman suddenly had to start talking about crime prevention when the Government found only how disastrously they were beginning to lose an argument that they thought they had in their pockets.

I intervened during the Home Secretary's speech, because I knew that the Government would not put their money where their mouth was when it came to crime prevention. The Prime Minister's statement from No. 10 Downing street about that charade of a conference on crime prevention contained no significant mention of money. The Home Secretary referred to the Hammersmith and Fulham scheme in my area. The right hon. Gentleman knows that I support it and that it will continue to be supported when Labour wins the council election today. However, funding for the scheme is still grossly inadequate. It is £50 a council flat. It is interesting that the Home Office does not fund such schemes. It wants the Department of the Environment to do so. The Home Secretary runs around saying, "Fund all these schemes", but we are not told from where all the money will come. The Department of the Environment goes around rate capping local authorities, cutting their money and saying to the Home Office, "We shall not do that." Unless the Home Secretary takes on board some of the responsibility, his desire for good works will be undone by other Ministers. The Government are not putting their money where their mouth is.

The Home Secretary asked me about the money for these measures. The Government constantly duck the fact that their economic policies have been a disastrous failure. If more is done to repair and renovate our older public and private properties, we decrease the chances of burglary. If we spend more on public lighting, clearing up graffiti and stopping vandalism, we do something to prevent crime and, more importantly, we expand that part of the economy that does not suck in imports. The Government are trying to get around such problems by giving tax handouts to the rich which are spent on imports which do not help in this country. We need to expand those aspects

that do not suck in imports and cause other problems. It is precisely those aspects that we can expand without too much difficulty.

The Government have done much damage with respect to crime prevention by cutting employment in the public sector. The Home Secretary will know from NACRO research that the number of fights on one-person operated buses is greater than on two-person operated buses.

We know that cutting the number of caretakers, as the Government and numerous Conservative councils have done, results in increased vandalism and crime. It is not enough to put in entryphone systems in some blocks of flats, because they are simply vandalised or left open for a variety of reasons. We need resident caretakers. The NACRO survey and the all-party penal policy group have made that clear. Do the Government want to come up with such a policy? No way. Even more important is the fact that they have cut back. That is one way in which they have made the problems worse. That is what I mean when I use the shorthand term of "tearing apart the social fabric" and refer to undermining and destabilising the community which are important considerations in crime prevention. NACRO has referred to many of those situational and social policies.

We cannot talk effectively about crime prevention if families with young children are put into high-rise flats, cuts are made in one o'clock clubs and nursery education and education generally is undervalued. The result is that children either stay in the flats all day, causing increased family tension, or play outside, often unsupervised, and quickly drift into vandalism and crime. It is no good coming along afterwards to probation officers, teachers and social workers and asking them to pick up the pieces. To some extent, the pieces can be picked up; but the problems need never have happened in the first place. The Government, especially the chairman of the Conservative party, who have spent so much time blaming teachers and parents for the crime wave, should look at what they have done in tearing apart the fabric of society.

Recently, the Government have taken one step which I guarantee will do more to increase crime than any other single factor of its type, although I am not saying that crime will increase just because of it. I refer to the board and lodging allowance. The Home Office study and virtually every other study demonstrates clearly that there is a link between homelessness, drug addiction, alcohol abuse and crime. By changing the board and lodging allowance, the Government have increased the crime rate and turned more young people to alcohol and drug abuse and to crime.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Where is the evidence?

Mr. Soley: The evidence is in two Home Office research papers.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Yes.

Mr. Soley: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has remembered it now. The link is very clear, and it should not surprise him. What does a young person do if, after six weeks, he is turned out of the place where he is staying? He might find accommodation on the floor of a friend's flat, or in a hostel, or he might turn to drink or drugs. That is an easy way to blot out the problem and the pain. It might also be a way of getting money. Anybody who does not think this through does not deserve to be considering crime prevention.

I have already written to the Home Secretary about firearms. Does the Home Secretary intend to make a statement to the House about the work of the committee that investigates the use of firearms by the police? I sent evidence to that committee. There is a strong case for setting up a committee of the type that I described in my evidence to consider the availability and the licensing of firearms. I am not convinced that the police are the best authority to deal with licensing. There is a strong case for the creation of a separate licensing authority. The paramilitary training that is now becoming so popular also needs to be investigated. This is an important area, to which much more attention must be given.

What this country is desperately crying out for—the Labour party has been putting this policy before the electorate for a number of years—is a well-resourced crime prevention and victim support scheme. A criminal justice system is needed that takes more account of the victim and of those who are brought into contact with the criminal justice system, often as witnesses. Alienation from that system and from the police is dangerously high. A proper system of police accountability is needed in which the police and the public have confidence. A fully independent police complaints authority is also needed.

A few years ago the Government were baying, at their highest level of decibels, that this was unacceptable. The Police Federation also said that it was unacceptable. However, the Police Federation is now 100 per cent. with the Labour party. It wants a fully independent police complaints authority for precisely the same reasons as the Labour party. It knows that the public will not have confidence in anything other than a properly accountable system. Significant progress could then be made.

I remind the House of the programme "Newsnight" that was shown last night. A police officer was interviewed. He said that as the crime rate is so high in Notting Hill he is being asked by the residents to do more about it. That sums up the problem. As the crime rate continues to increase in the inner city areas, various groups are found to be most vulnerable to certain types of policing. At the same time, the public want something to be done about crime. They shout, "Do something about crime". Understandably, therefore, the police feel that they are under pressure to do something about it.

The vast majority of crimes are cleared up after information has been given by the public to the police. When the relationship between the police and the public breaks down, the problem grows worse. When the police are under pressure to do something about crime they fall back on two measures that are likely to make it worse. They rely upon stop and search. They also rely upon breaking into houses and flats in order to get the evidence that they believe is there. In many cases, that triggers off the problems in our inner cities. The police find that they are screwing down the lid on a socially explosive situation.

The police are being used by the Government. I emphasise that the police are being used by the Government to deal with industrial relations and public order. If that continues, the police will continue to give the bird to the Home Secretary when he speaks to them. They have got wise to the way in which they have been used by this Government — hence the article in the Police Federation's magazine during the miners' strike which pointed out that the police must ask themselves whether they are being used to maintain law and order or whether they were being used by the Government to enforce their

[Mr. Soley]

industrial relations policy. That was a good question to ask. The Government have never used their industrial relations legislation, even though they said they would do so.

This Government's policy on law and order has been a disastrous failure. They know from the opinion polls and also from the Fulham by-election, where we were neck and neck with them, that they are losing this argument. Soon we shall be so far in front of the Government that they will not know what the argument was about. It is no use the Government coming crying to me about taking law and order out of politics. They have put that issue well and truly into politics. The Government will have to carry the can for their policy.

5.54 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I thank my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary for his speech and for his description of what the Government are doing. I thank him in particular for the advancement in the status of the post at the crime prevention centre at Stafford from the rank of chief superintendent to that of assistant chief constable. My right hon. Friend knows that I have advocated that development for a very long time in order to enhance the status of crime prevention within the police service. It is a most welcome development.

For many people, the fear of crime, if not the actuality of it, is a major concern. It is not surprising, therefore, that the public relations efforts of the Labour party are now geared to attracting the sympathy of the public, arising from their concern. But has the leopard changed its spots?

When the Labour party was last in government, its treatment of the police service and the criminal justice system was scandalous. Police morale over pay and conditions hit rock bottom. There was even talk of a police strike in 1977. Police morale was so low that 9,000 men left the service. In May 1979, force strengths in England and Wales were 7,710 below establishment. This included a shortfall of 16 per cent. in the Metropolitan police. The "bobby" disappeared from the beat and the police took to Panda cars because of their lack of manpower. That was the record of the Opposition when in government.

We are now told that the Labour party wishes to see the "bobby" return to the beat, but this is purely PR propaganda designed to pacify the electorate, or does it have any basis of reality? The intention of the Labour party to interfere with the police remains as strong as ever.

In 1981, under the title of "A Socialist Policy for the GLC", the London Labour party proposed that there should be a police authority in London consisting solely of elected members to have control over the Metropolitan and City of London police forces. It was proposed that this authority would have power to survey day-to-day police operations, allocate financial resources and appoint officers to the rank of chief superintendent and above. The authority would work in close liaison with Scotland Yard and would have overriding control of the capital's police recruitment training and contribution of mutual aid from one district to another. The House may consider that that was a very sinister proposal. In other words, there would be total political control of police operations, and political decisions would be made as to which demonstrations were to be controlled through policing and, indeed, which crimes were to be investigated, or not, as the case may be.

In those awful, corrupt years of the Labour party's control of the GLC from 1981 to 1986, millions of pounds of ratepayers' money were spent on anti-police propaganda. I shall give to the House but a few examples of this lavish expenditure. The Newham monitoring project received £240,755. The so-called Haringey independent police committee received £214,245. Police Accountability for Community Enlightenment, Islington —whatever that may be—received a modest £188,424. There are many other examples.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does my hon. Friend recall the GLC video called, "Policing London" which cost the ratepayers £35,000? It was geared towards schoolchildren and incited violence. It ended with the words, "Communities must rebel."

Mr. Wheeler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He draws attention to a most scandalous piece of publicity. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) claimed that he is concerned about crime prevention. However, that belies the actuality of what the Labour party has done when it has been in power.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) has made an especially shabby point. I think we should be more precise and I doubt whether the hon. Gentleman has actually seen the video. The words which the hon. Gentleman referred to were those used by a poet in the video. The words came from a poem which was read out by one person who was a member of that community. To suggest, therefore, that the GLC thought that the community should rebel is like saying that because Shakespeare put the words:

"To be or not to be"

into the mouth of Hamlet, Shakespeare was toying with the idea of becoming an existentialist.

Mr. Wheeler: The hon. Gentleman should not deceive the House on that point. He knows perfectly well why the video was crafted and presented in the way that it was. The video was a deliberate attack on the Metropolitan police and an incitement to young people to rebel against the police.

It might be claimed that the video and the other expenditure to which I have referred were merely the isolated work of the London Labour party and that such actions are untypical of Labour party policy. However, a motion was passed at the 1985 Labour party conference which sought to put the police and the courts under more direct political control. The motion stated that the new-styled democratic control—whatever that might mean—would have the

"authority to influence and direct local policing policy and practice."

That is a direct interference in the operational duties of the police. The Labour party cannot evade the consequences of that resolution.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman does not like democracy.

Mr. Wheeler: I would like to consider the work of that conference in detail. One delegate claimed, and again I quote from the record, that the police

"have become the enemy in whole areas."

That remark was greeted with sustained applause. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) accused some chief constables of making "party political interventions." The right hon. Member for Gorton

appeared to side with those in the conference who were against the police. The evidence of the Labour party's thinking about the police is limitless in its venom. Mr. Kenneth Livingstone was reported in the *Daily Mail* on 3 March 1984 as saying:

"I know a large proportion of the metropolitan police is clearly racist and should be pensioned off".

Louise Christian of the Streatham Labour party, and a member of the former GLC police committee, said at the party conference in 1984:

"You cannot condemn all violence without fear or favour, because the violence of the State is not comparable to the attempts of the provoked to fight back . . . Mr. Kinnock said that the police are the meat in the sandwich. They are the salmonella poisoning in the sandwich. Neil says that you should not break the law, because the Labour party needs legality. As a lawyer I say to you it is absolute rubbish."

Some lawyer! That seems to sum up the true thinking of the Labour party as against its PR efforts of today.

If the Labour party is really to convince the British public that it now believes in a citizen police force working with the community to prevent crime and offences, it will have to be more convincing. For example, the Labour party has consistently voted against the annual renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. Yet the evidence from the police is that that Act greatly contributed to preventing terrorist acts in London during the summer of 1985.

If the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) is to repeal that Act, he must answer four key questions: will he allow unopposed membership of the provisional IRA and/or the Irish National Liberation Army? Will he permit displays of support for such groups in public in the cities of the United Kingdom? Will he allow contributions towards acts of terrorism? Will he regard the failure to disclose information about terrorism as no longer an offence?

These days, the whole country has been appalled at the extent of the premeditated and organised violence at Wapping to which the hon. Member for Hammersmith referred. The hon. Member for Hammersmith gave his version of the events at Wapping. However, no one can doubt the degree of organisation behind that violence, nor the determination to attack the police. Many of us saw the newsreels on televison and witnessed what happened. Yet the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said in an interview on a news programme on 4 May that the police were "drunken thugs". So much for the attitude of the Labour party. What matters to the British people is the growth in crime and the strategy for dealing with it.

The Government have rightly recognised that since 95 per cent. of all crime relates to property and roughly breaks down into the categories of 30 per cent. auto crime—thefts of or from motor vehicles—25 per cent. burglary and the rest minor thefts and vandalism, any strategy for the containment of crime must involve the whole community, local authorities and Government Departments. It is nonsense to pretend that that overwhelming amount of property crime can be stopped only by the police and courts.

The greatest mistake this century has been to suppose that the responsibility for crime was solely a matter for the police and the courts. We all welcome the return of the police officer on the beat. The uniformed police officer patrolling on foot is a contact point and a reassurance. I do not underestimate the value of that exercise, yet the overwhelming bulk of crime takes place on private property out of sight and reach of the public.

One piece of research has shown that a patrolling police officer would stumble on a crime being committed only once in 15 years. Thus, the strategy of the Government to promote the concept of crime prevention involving the whole community must be right.

Of course, the Opposition seek to make political capital out of the reported rising crime rates. It must be said firmly that the problem of property crime affects all western countries. We have the lowest crime rate for violence among western countries and most of our crime—95 per cent.—relates to property. It is also clear why the crime problem predominantly relates to property.

In 1948 there were 2 million private cars licensed for use in the United Kingdom. By 1978 that figure had reached 14·5 million. Today there are more than 17·25 million. The crime statistics show that the incidence of auto crime exactly matches the growth and availability of the motor vehicle.

The same is true of property crime, and especially of residential burglary. In 1948, at current prices, the people of Britain had £8·7 billion available as personal disposable income. In 1978 they had just over £114 billion and today they have more than £237 billion. The growth in burglary rates exactly matches the growth in the goods and money available in people's homes to steal.

It is also interesting to consider who commits crime. Young males, aged between 10 and 17—and many of these are not close to employable age — are disproportionately responsible for the amount of crime committed. Fifteen is the peak age for offenders among boys and some 30 per cent. of persons found guilty of or cautioned for indictable offences in 1984 were in the 10 to 17 year age bracket. If we add on the 24 per cent. who commit crimes between the ages of 17 and 21, we find that more than half of those brought before the courts were aged between 10 and 21.

Property crime is essentially committed by young men, often immature, who see the opportunity for the commission of the offence and the certainty that they will not be caught. It is also a fact that in inner city areas, particularly in inner London, the truancy rate for boys in the 14 to 15-year-old group can vary between 20 and 30 per cent. In his review of the social causes of crime, the hon. Member for Hammersmith omitted that point. We must look at the role of education, and consider why it is failing those young teenagers.

Yet the opportunity to prevent crime is immense. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said, the Home Office has established a crime prevention unit. There is a standing conference on crime prevention and a great deal of work is being done, not only to reduce the fear of crime, which is very important, but to provide ordinary people with opportunities to prevent crime. The motor manufacturers are being encouraged to design more effective crime-free cars to stop the opportunist youngster stealing from the vehicle or driving it away. After all, that accounts for 30 per cent. of our crime problem.

The neighbourhood watch schemes have captured the imagination of the public to such a degree that there is mounting evidence that, where the public work together and with the police, the number of opportunist burglaries, largely committed by teenagers in our cities, can be dramatically reduced. The Commissioner of Police of the

[Mr. Wheeler]

Metropolis reported that the number of burglaries had dropped by 11 per cent., from more than 109,000 in 1984 to just over 97,000 in 1985, and he readily acknowledges the joint effort made by the police, through crime prevention measures, and the public, through neighbourhood watch schemes, in achieving this desirable result.

There is, of course, much more to be done, but the welcome initiatives to which the Home Office is now committed suggest that the containment of crime is realisable. However, the reporting of crimes is likely to continue to show a rising number of offences, as more people now report offences and there are 10,000 more police officers to receive those reports. Crime prevention means encouraging the reporting of crimes that would otherwise go unrecorded.

It is sometimes thought that those who suffer most from crime are the people who live in the plush suburbs or who have evidence of wealth or consumer goods. That is not necessarily true. Following field work that was carried out in 1984, the British crime survey showed that over 45 per cent. of losses resulting from burglaries involved sums of £25 or less. Only 10 per cent. of those losses involved £500 or more.

Many hon. Members know of the distress caused to the elderly or to those on low incomes who are plagued by the teenage burglars who operate on inner city council estates. Their losses and fears are every bit as real and important to the Government and the crime prevention strategy as those who lose substantial amounts. The Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw), has asked me, as a member of the Home Office steering committee on crime prevention, to look at the problem of residential burglary. One of the tasks of that group is to produce an inner city crime prevention package that is usable by everyone.

For example, the fitting of a decent mortice lock to a door might cost as little as £18. It would give peace of mind, as well as effective crime prevention, to many households in inner city areas. Possibly 25 per cent. of those living in inner London or other cities are drawing housing or supplementary benefit, and they are just as entitled to protection from burglary as any other group.

Dr. Godman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wheeler: If the hon. Gentleman allows me to continue, I may cover the point that he has in mind.

Ultimately, I believe that there should be a formula to provide some financial support either through the municipal landlord or the private landlord—or, indeed, the individual home owner—to enable crime prevention products to be fitted to the home. It is certainly an attractive idea. What I do not think is necessary is a wasteful blanket approach of a grant available to everybody, with the bureaucratic expense that that entails. I very much hope that the working group that I am associated with will be able to produce a formula that both the Home Office and the Department of the Environment find acceptable.

Property crime is of great concern to most people. It is preventable. Some strategies require the direct involvement of the local authority. Examples of that have already been given. Some strategies require dramatic action to be taken by local authorities, such as the removal of walkways and the creation of what are called "defensible areas". All of that is achievable. But I am glad that this Government's strategy is increasingly making an impact. If the Opposition are genuine about wanting the same successes, I hope that they will change their attitude to the police and encourage the public to work with the police for the overall prevention of crime.

6.15 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for making it clear that it is in order to raise the events at Wapping in this debate. Indeed, those events have already been referred to by the Home Secretary and by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

I spent four or five hours at Wapping on Saturday night, and I saw scenes taking place within two miles of the House that I have never seen before in this country and that I hope not to live to see again. Ten thousand demonstrators were there in order to greet marchers from Scotland. There were 1,700 police officers present. According to Home Office figures, there were 175 police casualties. As the Home Secretary knows, I have written to him, asking for four things: the names of the police officers injured at Wapping; the nature of their injuries; the names and addresses of the hospitals at which they were treated; and the dates on which each officer returned to duty. There were more than 80 casualties among those present at the meeting. I could list many of them, but they are recorded in the many photographs taken and in a video taken that night.

Whatever the Home Secretary may say, he is responsible for the Metropolitan police. He found it unnecessary to make a statement to the House, and has chosen instead to shield himself behind the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, Sir Kenneth Newman. If he thinks that the demand for control of the police by the London elected body is something new, I should tell him that in 1892 my grandfather moved that the police in London should be under the control of the new London county council. The reason given for opposing it then was that the Home Secretary had to preserve control over the London police because of the risk of Irish terrorism. Thus, I hope that no one tells us that demands for the democratic control of the police are a product of the hard Left or of some new breed of extremism.

I was struck by the fact that running through the speech of the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) was the fear that the people might have an opportunity to determine the nature of policing through the ballot box. I have always believed — and the GLC's abolition confirms it — that the Conservative party is afraid not of the rhetoric that may be engaged in by Socialists at public meetings but of democracy.

Like every citizen in Britain, I want a strong and effective police force. I readily agreed to give lectures at the Derbyshire police college in Butterly Park, Ripley. Those who have attended the lectures will know that I turned my mind as best I could to the way in which an effective police force could enjoy the public's confidence. But it is impossible to preserve law and order if there is the sort of suspicion between the public and the police that was released by the events at Wapping.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North seemed to think that he had just discovered that crime occurs on council estates. But I get many complaints from my constituents about the failure to provide proper local

policing on council estates where there are problems of vandalism and mugging, or where young people are running round out of control.

One of the reasons why the police do not police these areas properly is that they are diverting their efforts to other matters. Another reason is that local police chiefs have no responsibility to the communities they police. They do not have to take a blind bit of notice of them. They are supported in that by the hon. Member for Westminster, North, who believes that they should be wholly exempt from any democratic control. If one applied that to the Army and said, "Surely no one will say that the Army should be under democratic control," the next question would be, "Why should the Government be under democratic control?"

Mr. Wheeler *rose——*

Mr. Benn: I shall give way in a moment but I wish to give the full weight of my argument.

In a democracy, the police are under democratic control. It is that control which does, or should, distinguish this country from a police state. It may be that, for practical reasons and sensibly so, operational responsibilities rest with the policeman on the spot, but the use made of that discretion must be as answerable afterwards as is the Army if, under the orders of the Ministry of Defence, it engages in conflict. Just as the Civil Service, the Treasury and any other department responsible to Parliament through a Ministry has to answer for what it does, so must the police. In the absence of that, the hon. Member for Westminster, North is advocating nothing less than a police state.

Mr. Wheeler: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for allowing me to respond. He has totally misrepresented my position. I believe, and the law at present believes, that the police are accountable. Ultimately, the police are accountable to the Chamber. They are accountable for their actions to the courts of law and the magistrates. The police should decide their operational priorities. It is that which divides the right hon. Gentleman from me and other Conservative Members. He would wish to direct police operations.

Mr. Benn: No, that is absolutely false. I have made it clear that, for the purpose of operational activities, the police have to take decisions, but they must be answerable for what they do and they must be answerable to the people over whom they exercise their powers. To put it in a nutshell, the police are there to protect us and not to control us; they are there to defend us and not to attack us. That is the issue I wish to deal with arising from the scenes at Wapping.

I must give the House the background to what happened on Saturday night. Mr. Rupert Murdoch, who made £47 million out of News International in the past year, sacked 5,500 print workers, with no compensation whatever. Those print workers—I might add that over the years they have printed stories not very helpful to the causes which I espouse—have been treated in a shabby, rotten way. Since the decision to sack them, the print workers have been meeting outside the Wapping works. I have attended meetings there before and, on Saturday night, they planned to receive a group of marchers from all over the country who had marched through Britain telling people what Rupert Murdoch had done.

The marchers were given a civic send-off at Glasgow. They came through Chesterfield and I marched in with them. At Chesterfield, they were given a reception and there was a meeting in the market square the following day. The marchers arrived at Wapping on Saturday night with 10,000 people because the justice of their cause required it. When they reached Wapping they met the police.

I should like to say a word about the difference between this and the miners' strike. In the case of the miners' strike, Ministers said that the police were there to guarantee the right of people to go to work. In Wapping, the police are there to prevent 5,500 people from going to work. In the miners' strike, we were told that the dismissals were due to the fact that the pits were uneconomic, but Murdoch has made £47 million out of the labour of those whom he has sacked. The relationship of the police to the print workers is totally different from that which existed with the miners.

We now know one or two things about the police. The tactical operations manual was forced out of the police under cross-examination in the Orgreave trials. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that, on 22 July last year, I asked for your consent to place this manual in the Library, which you gave. From the manual we learn what instructions are given to the police, with the authority of the Home Secretary, although the instructions were drafted by the Association of Chief Police Officers. That body has no authority whatever in this country other than the fact that it is a sort of trade union or club for chief constables.

I have explained the background for the print workers and Murdoch's background, but what was the background for the police who attended in Wapping on Saturday night? They had the tactical operations manual. Sub-heading e. deals with the functions of the mounted police which concern:

"Dispersing a crowd using impetus to create fear and a scatter effect".

Manoeuvre No. 10 states:

"Mounted officers advance on a crowd in a way indicating that they do not intend to stop".

Let us not be told that these scenes were necessarily triggered by missiles being thrown. Manoeuvre No. 10 states the instructions given to the police and we could see the police lined up outside the plant ready to follow them. Manoeuvre No. 6 refers to the short shield baton team deployed into the crowd. It states:

"They disperse the crowd and incapacitate missile throwers and ring leaders by striking in a controlled manner with batons about the arms and legs or torso so as not to cause serious injury".

Manoeuvre No. 7 states:

"This unit will initially be protected by long-shield officers or personnel carriers and on the command will run at the crowd in pairs to disperse and/or incapacitate".

These are the police instructions. There is no question about it. They were prepared by the police. The ordinary decent constables—many of whom I know—thoroughly dislike what they are asked or ordered to do. We must not let anyone say that those instructions, which were given to the police, were necessarily the wishes of the constables at Wapping on Saturday night.

Dr. Godman *rose——*

Mr. Benn: No, I shall not give way. This is a very important matter.

When the incidents at Wapping were raised in the House on Tuesday, the Leader of the House said that it

[Mr. Benn]

proved the value of trade union legislation. What has trade union legislation got to do with releasing mounted police into those who attend a public meeting? From the Home Secretary's language today it is implied that those people were rioting. The question of riot came up at the Orgreave trials and I saw some of that riot on television. Every one of those accused was acquitted. Why? When the police video was shown, it was seen that there were six cavalry charges before the stones were thrown.

The BBC bears a heavy responsibility in this. I heard from one of the newsroom people that the director of news on BBC television ordered those preparing that film for the night bulletin to transpose the order of the film to show the missiles and then the police charging. The police video, which was consecutive, showed a very different picture.

Sir Eldon Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I shall try to give way in a moment but I want to deal with this matter because it is one of the reasons why people sitting at home, who do not know what has happened, believe what they are told. In this case it is that the charge was triggered by an attack on the police.

Mr. Hurd: The account which the right hon. Gentleman is now discrediting is the account which has just been given to us by his hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

Mr. Benn: My hon. Friend was behind the police line. He saw it from one point, but I saw it and I cling to what I saw. I arrived at about 8.30 pm, having been invited to speak at a meeting.

Mr. Soley: Perhaps I could make it quite clear that I watched the video in the police headquarters, so I saw what happened after the event.

Mr. Benn: I do not want to be involved in hearsay evidence. I was present and I saw what I saw. The Home Secretary is laughing at the injuries sustained, but he was not present and is trying to shelter behind Sir Kenneth Newman to avoid his responsibility. I saw what I saw with my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) —my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith was on site—and Rodney Bickerstaffe, the general secretary of the National Union of Public Employees, and Brenda Dean were also there.

I appealed to the crowd to write to me, and I received 70 letters this morning, which I have not had time to analyse in detail. I also have pictures showing the injuries that were sustained. One is of a photographer who was battered by the police. I have others, and I shall send them to the Home Secretary. Last night, I received a video recording taken by a unit which was on the spot. The matter must be taken seriously.

I shall describe what I saw with my own eyes. I originally positioned myself opposite the plant behind the fence. There was a puff of smoke. I thought that it was tear gas, but it might have been a smoke bomb. No missiles were being thrown. The mounted police advanced out of the plant exactly as the tactical options manual says that they should. They ran into the crowd. They were covered by riot police, who did several things. First, they ran indiscriminately into the crowd and battered people who had had nothing whatever to do with any stones that might have been thrown. It is no good the Home Secretary shaking his head—I saw it with my own eyes. I shall read from only three of the 70 letters, which confirm what I am saying later.

The police did exactly what the tactical options manual said they should. They ran 20 or 30 yards, saw people standing—women, children and grandparents—turned into the crowd and attacked them with their batons. They surrounded the bus that was acting as an ambulance. One man had a heart attack and I appealed over the loudspeaker for the police to withdraw to allow an ambulance to come. None was allowed for 30 minutes. When the man was put on a trestle, a police horse jostled it and the man nearly fell off as he was carried out to the ambulance. The police surrounded the park where the meeting took place. They surrounded the area so that people could not escape. They surrounded the platform where we were trying to hold the meeting. That went on for three or four hours.

I went to Chief Superintendent Goodall and appealed to him to withdraw his men. I appealed to the crowd to stay calm. I was on the platform and relatively safe but there was great anxiety among the people who saw the casualties and how the police were behaving. Two ITN men were hospitalised. Why did ITN not report that? Can hon. Members imagine another incident in the world when a cameraman is hospitalised trying to film a demonstration because he is attacked by the police which is not even referred to on the news bulletin? No wonder Sir Alastair Burnet got his knighthood! A BBC unit had its lights smashed by the police because it was filming what they were doing. That did not appear on the BBC news either. No wonder MI5 vets those who run the major news bulletins and administration on the BBC.

This is a matter which must be dealt with other than by an exchange in the House. If this had occurred in South Africa, Poland or any other country, it would have dominated the headlines and the news bulletins for days and days. I can understand the newspaper proprietors not wanting it to be reported because they hope that Murdoch will beat the print workers so that they can beat their own print workers, but that public service broadcasting stations should deny the public the truth about what happened that night is an utter disgrace and the matter should be raised in the House.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To prevent the right hon. Gentleman from making more of a fool of himself, may I tell him that there is an objective video recording of the incident?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Gentleman is paid to say this.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Although I can understand that, from one vantage point, the right hon. Gentleman may have formed certain impressions, which he has described, the objective video of the entire operation is available, timed and does not coincide with his description of events.

Mr. Benn: I believe that the hon. Gentleman is a paid employee of the Police Federation. He is entitled to come here and earn his money supporting the Police Federation if he chooses to do so. I have no objection to that because there have always been trade union representatives in the House. I shall quote some of the letters that I have received. One comes from Chelsfield in Kent and says:

"Printers who bring their mothers, fathers, wives and children to a rally to meet colleagues who had marched from Glasgow and Newcastle do not use the occasion to attack the police."

It continues:

"The riot squad then entered the enclosed area from all sides attacking anyone in their path. Within yards of me a man was felled and had a heart attack. He was one of the marchers from Glasgow. We appealed to the police to retreat, but they showed no regard to any of the injured. About 30 minutes passed before an ambulance was able to get through."

A woman from Orpington writes:

"I am the wife of an ex-Sun employee . . . The shocking behaviour of the riot police who constantly attacked the crowd, many of whom were women and children, was nothing short of barbaric. They were completely out of control and seemed to enjoy what they were doing. The impression that this will leave on the minds of young children is unthinkable."

A woman from Shepperton wrote:

"On Saturday night the BBC lost its camera, knocked out by the riot squad before the horses charged. This is not the first camera they have lost. This also applied to ITN. These are planned attacks by the police."

The letter continues:

"On the second charge of the night—and there were many—that I happened to be involved in, the pickets, including a T.V. cameraman and his crew from Western Germany, were chased by screaming abusing police into a side road which may have been Dock Street."

Some people might say that not all of those who went were print workers. I know that that is true. I have here a letter which runs:

"I am not a print worker, but a middle-aged deputy head teacher of a primary school, who now finds it very difficult to instil into children a respect of the police after my experiences at Wapping.

Last Saturday I was not at the main entrance, but at Glamis Road. Everything was calm until about midnight, when with no warning, the police horses were ridden like a cavalry charge from Glamis Road into the crowd. Even when the demonstrators rushed to the pavements for safety, the horses charged on to the pavements knocking people over and against walls."

It is no good Conservative Members trying to pretend that it did not happen. It did happen. I was not present, but that deputy head teacher has evidence which should go to a public inquiry.

All of this results from a deliberate attempt by the Government to criminalise dissent in Britain. It has happened at Greenham common, although not as badly. It has happened to the black community. It happened to the miners. It is happening to the print workers. I believe that the Government are guilty of a gross misuse of the police in support of their own political policies. It is a serious threat to civil liberties.

There should be a public inquiry, but I am encouraged by the Home Secretary saying that it is all the responsibility of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to ask the House and the Government to suspend Sir Kenneth Newman as he is responsible for what happened on Saturday night and Sunday morning. We must have elected police authorities.

Police constables are under no obligation to obey unlawful orders. I saw a man with a helmet and a few pips on his shoulder—I do not know whether he was an inspector—instructing them to go into the crowd where they wrought such havoc among innocent people. I believe that that was an unlawful order.

After the Nuremberg trials, police constables should know—they will know better than me—that it is not lawful to be told to attack people and to incapacitate them when they are simply there to attend a meeting. If somebody can be found throwing stones, they are arrested, charged and tried, but they are not incapacitated. One does not use police horses against innocent people. I advised the crowd that night and I advised them again to follow methods of non-violence. Non-violence practised by Mr. Gandhi got the British out of India and non-violence in this country is the best answer. Having said that, I must also say that innocent people, unlawfully attacked, whether by police or anybody else, are entitled to the right of self-defence.

People who are now thinking of organising demonstrations should have doctors present, because they will need them. They should also have nurses and lawyers present. I took a lawyer with me when I tried to see Chief Superintendent Goodall. He said that he did not want to speak to me because I had someone with me. I told him that I was going to raise this matter in the House and I insisted that a lawyer be present. People who are organising demonstrations should also have video cameras there because one will not see the truth on the BBC or ITN and one should have photographers there to know what really happened and have independent witnesses.

The media black-out makes it difficult for those who are not present to understand what I have said, the detail that will be in the letters, which I hope will all be published, and the passion with which I have spoken. Never in my life have I seen anything like that happen in this country.

I believe that the cause of the print workers is just. I believe that people should not buy *The Sun*, *The Times*, the *Sunday Times* or the *News of the World* or distribute them. If people go to listen to those who have marched the length and breadth of the country, like the Jarrow marchers, to alert people to what is happening, and they gather for a peaceful meeting to be addressed by five people, three of whom are Members of the House, they ought not to be attacked in such a way and systematically batoned by the police. The responsibility ultimately rests with the Home Secretary. Since I do not expect any satisfactory answer, I appeal from this House to the public to see that there is such a wave of protest that such a thing can never happen again.

6.41 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): For many years, a long time ago, I was a reporter and foreign correspondent and I know how easy it is, standing in the middle of a riot or demonstration or engaged in war, for an individual to form a picture of events that he believes to be the complete one. I have a description written by another observer at the Wapping affair to which the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) referred.

Mr. Benn: Which paper is it from?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I shall come to that. It says:

"a march of 2,500 pickets had passed peacefully down Fleet Street, but they were joined by members of the Socialist Workers and Communist parties before they reached the plant. At first, there was almost a carnival atmosphere in the streets.

Then, at exactly 10 pm—as if pre-arranged—the violence erupted with smoke flares being thrown into the police lines as demonstrators tried to surge into the plant. Scotland Yard described it as 'a major and concerted attack on the police, totally unprovoked and malicious'."

The report goes on to say:

"Two pickets were pulled down by police and arrested as they ran into the plant threatening to 'carve up' the wives and children of the workers inside.

The anti-police violence was spurred on by . . . union leaders haranguing the crowd over loudspeakers. . . . the more moderate Brenda Dean, general secretary of Sogat 82, was booed as she took the platform."

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

I no more credit the totality of that report in the *Sunday Times* than I do the report of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield as both were observers standing in particular places unable to form a judgment of the entire scene.

However, perhaps unknown to the right hon. Gentleman, on a high point overlooking the scene there was a video camera. That camera recorded not all but a large proportion of the events that took place over several hours. I have seen that video. It is, as with all videos taken at night in difficult conditions, in many respects obscure. It is difficult to follow and a great deal of it is rather tedious. However, with the timed clock built into the film one cannot be in any doubt about the order of what happened. The police line was standing firm as the marchers went by and the demonstration got off to a good start. Then, just as the *Sunday Times* reported, at precisely 10 o'clock a large surge of people comes from the right and the police line starts to buckle. Fighting breaks out. Some police officers fall to the ground. Then visibly, the missiles start to be thrown. Some of them explode as they come to the ground. They may have been smoke grenades or possibly petrol bombs—I cannot be certain because I have only seen the video. However, the smoke rises, more police officers fall, fighting commences and the police line is clearly broken. It was only at that point, several minutes after the missiles were thrown, that the first shield groups went in and the police horses followed. Therefore, it is totally untrue to suggest that the police initiated the violence. On the contrary, they suffered a great deal of violence and many casualties before they responded, as they must, to maintain the rule of law.

Mr. Benn: The hon. Gentleman was not there. He has seen a video taken from the roof of a building at night. I was there and the *Sunday Times* man claims to have been there, perhaps watching it from inside. Surely the matters we are discussing, the differences of opinion and the evidence available are so important that the hon. Gentleman will at least join me in demanding a public inquiry where all these matters can be brought forward by those who are ready to give evidence in an independent assessment of the event. It is wholly wrong that it should be left to the *Sunday Times*, the representative of the Police Federation and one or two people who were there to settle the matter with the Home Secretary who laughed during much of my speech when I was explaining what happened.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Of course, there will be the best form of public inquiry that we have. The courts of law will decide this matter. They will not decide it on the partial witness of people such as the right hon. Gentleman, who saw something, or of the gentleman from the *Sunday Times* who says he saw something else. The courts will take into account and weigh the totality of the evidence. I would advise the right hon. Gentleman not to reach conclusions which are justiciable and evidential at this point. The courts of law will settle this matter, not exchanges in the House. That is why I regret and resent the right hon. Gentleman's attempt to reach decisions on justiciable matters in our national legislature. These are matters for the police to bring before the courts of law and for judges and juries to determine, not Members of Parliament.

Mr. Benn: When the police numbers were not visible, how can I, who observed the scene and saw the riot police come in, bring an action? The hon. Gentleman knows that he has in mind the police giving evidence against people. He also knows that it would be impossible, given the circumstances, for the people whose letters I read out to take actions which would lead to criminal prosecution against unnumbered police who, in some case, were engaged in criminal assault.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The right hon. Gentleman who knows many things simply reveals how little he knows about the processes of the law and the processes of complaint against the police. Complaints can and should be made against the police by himself, any other hon. Gentleman or any member of the public who feels aggrieved. There is, quite properly, an independent police complaints authority which will weigh what he has to say. Ultimately, justice rests upon the courts and not upon the intersecting monologues that are thrown around the House.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): How does one identify the police officers when they were not wearing numbers?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Because some officers had to put on protective clothing in the face of the missiles that were being thrown, some of them did not have their numbers. I very much regret that. I can see the practical problem. However, it is simply not true to suggest that none of the police officers had their numbers on. I believe that the overwhelming majority did and they could have been identified.

I move from Wapping, which has understandably exercised the House, to the principal subject of this debate and the admirable speech of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. As always, I listened carefully to the thoughtful contribution of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

The tide of recorded crime has been rising relentlessly in this country under all Governments every year for the past 41 years. In the late 1940s, about 250,000 crimes were recorded each year; in the early 1950s, it was 500,000; in the early 1960s it passed the 1 million mark; in the early 1970s it passed the 2 million mark; it went up to nearly 3 million by the end of the 1970s; and today it is probably on its way to 4 million.

There are all kinds of reasons for this quantitative explosion in the volume of crime in our country, and very few of them have anything to do with the political complexion of the Government of the day. One reason is that there are many more people — about 12 million more over the past 20 years. We have five or six times more vehicles and many more tourists. Above all, we have more laws, be they simple matters such as construction and use legislation in transport or a variety of other things that this House has passed. We also have more policemen.

Taken together, those things go some way towards explaining why the numbers of crimes reported to the police have increased, yet none of them in any way explains the 16-fold increase in crimes reported to the police over the past generation under Labour and Conservative Governments alike.

I have been involved in this matter for an uncomfortably long time — some 17 years — and my assessment, which coincides with that of the police service, is that today our society is experiencing a new and disturbing phenomenon. We have a greater propensity to

break the law and to commit crime. I have asked myself a thousand times why that should be so. But it is not unique to Britain; it is the case throughout the Western world, and no doubt the Eastern world as well.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith laid a great deal of the blame on unemployment and poor social conditions. Of course I see that they must play some part, but I must also say that there is no evidence to suggest that those who are out of work commit more crimes that those who are in work. I must also acknowledge that some of the most violent crimes are committed not by those who live in poor neighbourhoods but by the jeunesse d'orée—the gilded youth. Those who have more money and live in good social conditions are most often the sources of violent crime than the poor.

Mr. Soley: Not for the first time, the hon. Gentleman misquotes me. I did not say that there is a direct link between crime and unemployment. There is not, and never has been. There is a link between unemployment and imprisonment. The important point is that there is a link between the collapse of the community and community ties and crime, and part of the reason is the issues that I raised, including long-term youth unemployment.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman has already made his speech and does not need to make it again. Perhaps he will allow me to make mine.

I accept that there is some relationship with unemployment and social conditions, but it is by no means direct. Far more important as sources of crime are the moral and social changes that we have seen across society —the breakdown of family life, the vast increase in broken homes, the large number of children who are brought up in one-parent families that either cannot or do not train them to respect other people's property, more money to buy hard liquor and on occasion drugs that youngsters cannot handle. Meanwhile, many of our schools are less inclined to instil in their students what I am not ashamed to describe as old-fashioned values. Classroom discipline in a large minority of our middle and upper schools has deteriorated, while a few teachers set their pupils a poor example. Similarly, in factories and offices, it is the experience of the police that there is today —and I think we all know it—a pretty high volume of casual petty thieving, fiddling and cheating the boss. At a higher economic level, tax evasion has become a national pastime.

The way in which the press and television report crime and violence must also have some effect in normalising dishonesty and conditioning young people to violence. I am convinced that in Tottenham and Brixton we saw examples of imitative violence as a result of unbalanced youngsters copying in real life what previously they had seen only on the television screens.

Public figures as well often set the wrong example. While this House was debating the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, the GLC issued tens of thousands of leaflets portraying the police as racists and oppressors. While the Committee on the Safety of Medicines was debating whether to allow Depo-Pfovera—a new contraceptive jab—to be available on the NHS, certain women's organisations, partly financed by Left-wing councils, put out pamphlets that suggested that white doctors, backed by the police, would use this to

"solve the immigrant problem by rendering black females infertile".

Soon afterwards, other militants daubed many of the black areas of south London with vicious propaganda that falsely claimed that it was the police who had set fire to the house in Deptford where a number of black youngsters were burnt.

Against that background, is it really any wonder that some black younsters are prepared to launch themselves, like Zulus, at the police, or that some young people in south Yorkshire were ready to bombard the police with stones, when on their television sets they could see the president of the NUM not only preaching violence but actually leading his mob against the police?

There are two other examples set by politicians that do nothing but harm. One was at Broadwater Farm. Like the hon. Member for Hammersmith, I visited the area soon after the arson and violence, and while the looted shops and burnt-out cars were still disfiguring the neighbourhood, the leader of Haringey council not only refused to condemn the riots and the killing of a policeman, but, worse, the local Labour candidate for Parliament, councillor Bernie Grant, accused the police of murdering PC Blakelock themselves. He said that the rioters should be congratulated on giving the police a good hiding. We have now seen at Wapping language used by hon. Members of this House describing the police as "all that is worst in our society."

These are some of the sources of the increase in lawlessness in Britain, and they help to explain why in my view the propensity to violence is increasing. But there is a second major feature of the contemporary crime map. Crime today is much more violent and complicated than it was in the 1950s.

Far more crime is now committed with the aid of cars, weapons and drugs. Many more very young and very elderly people are involved both as perpetrators as well as victims—for example, the rape of a 9-year-old girl and a child of three with oral gonorrhoea. On the other side of the coin we have a boy of 10 charged with being a rapist, and an 82-year-old woman who was imprisoned in the airing cupboard of her council house until she suffocated and died. At the time of her death she weighed less than five stone. She was imprisoned there by three boys, all of them under 14, who wanted to cash her pension cheques.

Similarly, as crime becomes more violent it also becomes more complex. Computer crime is flourishing and public order crimes take on far more political, ideological, racial and industrial connotations. Meanwhile, Britain has become the scene of international crime, notably Irish and middle east terrorism.

What are the consequences to the police service of these changes in the nature of crime, its increased complexity, its increased ferocity and its ever more international character? The rise in crimes involving firearms not only means many more deaths and serious injuries; it has produced armed policemen. The increase in complex frauds means that the police must train and deploy many more highly specialised fraud squad officers. A single major fraud can now occupy as many as half a million hours of senior detective time before any real progress is made. Public order problems create insatiable demands for more policemen. Not a weekend goes by without the Metropolitan police having half a dozen demonstrations, marches and protest meetings to handle, not to speak of football hooliganism and the increased demand for better and more trained officers to man drug squads, special

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

branch enquiries, anti-terrorist and diplomatic protection squads, and the ever rising demand for more men to guard the Houses of Parliament and indeed Government offices.

I just want to mention one problem that has not, to my surprise, been touched on, namely, the difficulty of policing multi-occupation high rise housing estates. Many of these areas in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow have been turned into the habitat of the lonely, the neglected, the deprived and the single elderly; others, like Broadwater Farm, have become to a large extent ghettos, because the public, and not the police, have made them so. Too often the consequence is a rise in petty crime and juvenile delinquency.

How are the police then to cope in such an environment? To what community do they look for consent as they seek in such non-neighbourhoods to protect the poor, the weak and the innocent? I admit that the police know too little about what goes on in these high-rise concrete jungles. They visit such places only rarely and then only when called on to deal with one, shall we say, out of every three robberies or domestic brawls that take place there every night. I concede that there are occasions when the police intervene, but they arrive mainly in cars and in strength. Especially in immigrant areas, this kind of reactive policing makes for bad police/public relations. Tottenham, Brixton and Toxteth underline this.

Yet no one is doing more to remedy this problem than the metropolitan police forces themselves. They do this through local consultative committees—my right hon. Friend referred to those. Unfortunately, they are too often boycotted by the Left. They do so too by police visits to schools and youth clubs, although these too are sometimes forbidden by Left-wing teachers, as in Hackney, and by calls on elderly people in the company of social workers, although on occasion some social workers reinforce local antagonisms towards the police service.

Since the Scarman report, every urban police division that I know has been trying—and how they try—to bridge the gap between the local police and the so-called ghetto dwellers. But bridges need to be built from both sides of a gulf. It is also important to recognise that community policing, to which we all devote ourselves, is not always the answer to the problem. On the face of it, of course, it makes good sense for the police to operate with and through the consent of the community that they serve. But whose consent exactly are the police to obtain? Plainly, not the criminal's. What about the pickets during the miners' strike or at Wapping? Or the black youth leaders in Brixton? Or the Left-wing council in Haringey, or the Protestant majority in Ulster?

I want to put this question to my right hon. Friend quite precisely. When, as in the Broadwater Farm ghetto in Tottenham or in the Nottinghamshire coalfield or in Northern Ireland when the Government decide to ban an Orange day march, the police are caught in the middle of disputes between two sides of the same community, between the older blacks and whites who want to live in peace and the younger ones who enjoy riots, between the print workers who want to work and the print workers who want to stop them, between the Protestant majority which wants to exercise its right to parade and shout, "Hang the Pope", and the Catholic minority that hates this, in these circumstances when the police are caught in the middle, how and from whom are they expected to obtain something called the community's "consent"?

The reality, of course, is that the consent that the police must seek is not to be found in the habits and emotions of any local community at one particular time, although common sense demands that these always be treated by the police with care and respect. The consent that matters most resides in universal standards expressed, as they must be, in the law. The great merit of the law is that it provides the only secure and universal standard that is not subject to the partial standards of particular communities. Nor is it subject to the shifting values of public opinion. Yet all this the notion of policing by parochial consent implicitly undermines.

Local consent is not always even relevant to the nature of the crime that the police must tackle in today's society. I give one example. What is the role of community policing in tackling terrorist crimes? Intelligence is an important factor, and strong links with the community can improve the quality of tip-offs. But when the IRA gang which had detonated bombs in half a dozen west end restaurants, killing and maiming scores of Londoners, was finally cornered in Balcombe street, it was not Dixon of Dock Green, pounding the beat as a community constable in Piccadilly, who identified and gave chase to them, who cornered and besieged them and eventually forced the release of their hostages.

In those circumstances, the police have to be specialised. This kind of operation, like those at the Iranian and Libyan embassy sieges, has to be carried out, for the protection of the public, by the highly trained groups of the CID or by the anti-terrorist or bomb squads. The same goes more and more for perhaps a quarter of all current police operations. As crime becomes more dangerous, more complex and more technically sophisticated, the police response simply cannot always be the bobby on the beat. The police must respond in terms of the threat that they face.

In particular, that goes for their response to the threats against public order. When mobs—I say this bluntly—of drug-crazed youngsters set fire to part of our inner cities, when armies of pickets go roaring round the coalfields with the declared aim of imposing their will by force or intimidation and, in the process, obstruct the highway or threaten people's lives or property, it is no use for the police to attempt to contain these challenges with no more lawful force than is available to the community constable. The riot squad has to go in.

The truth is that community policing, which we all support, is rather like motherhood or the United Nations. It is an unarguable public good. But it can work well only when there is a comparatively settled and homogeneous community. The arsenal of police responses to the challenge of violent crime and public disorder today needs to include a wide range of alternative responses, from accountancy to investigate complex frauds to deadly marksmanship when faced with terrorist murderers that the police may have no choice but to shoot to kill.

I want to indicate how the police react to the choice that they now are offered between the policies of the two Front Benches. The police, as they always do, will stay out of politics. They will form their own opinions and they will keep quiet about them. My suggestion to them is that they make their judgment on the claims of the two main parties to be the policeman's friend by two pragmatic tests.

The first is that when hard choices must be made, for example, over street violence, they should ask themselves which politicians can be relied upon to stand four square with the police in upholding the law. The second test is, which party in office is the more likely to provide the necessary resources and support that policemen need to do their job? In my view, the present Government pass both tests.

Ministers—they will not be surprised to hear me say this—have upset the police by failing to consult them on matters that affect the efficiency of the service. They have upset them by surrounding them with paper work and bureaucracy as a result of some of the work that we have all done in the House on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. They have upset them by not moving fast enough to prevent some loss of manpower in nearly every force in response to the Treasury's cash limits and the penalties of the Department of the Environment on local expenditure. But the present Government's copper card is copper-bottomed because they kept faith with the police on two specific issues. They implemented the Edmund Davies pay award over which the Labour party hovered, and ever since since they have honoured that award in full. Secondly, in and out of Parliament Ministers, and in particular the Prime Minister, have stood firm behind the police whenever they have come under attack from violent men.

I turn to the Labour party. I wish the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) were here. Many policemen in my experience at one time had much sympathy for and have probably supported the Labour party.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): That is very decent of them.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman.

Unfortunately, Labour's image in the police service has been badly flawed by its tendency automatically to take sides against the police whenever individual issues arise, and also by its poor record on police issues when in office. Every policeman welcomes the evidence that the Leader of the Opposition is distancing himself from the anti-police brigade in his party. It is deeds, not words, that count, and the Labour party will have to work hard to erase the service's memories of 9,000 of its best men quitting in disgust because Labour in government denied them decent pay and support.

Mr. Soley: I am not interested in responding to the hon. Gentleman's homily which I do not think has much bearing in fact. I would rather go by my own contact when I speak at police meetings. I want the hon. Gentleman to explain to the House why, at the last police conference, the Home Secretary was so roundly booed.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I was there and spoke at considerable length. As I have said, Ministers had upset the police in the ways I have described. We shall see how my right hon. Friend fares in three or four weeks' time in Blackpool. If the hon. Gentleman presses me on the matter, I can only say that I have never been present at a more disturbing and worrying occasion than when a Labour Home Secretary was given the silent treatment by the police. I had never seen a politician treated so harshly before.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take the matter seriously. If the Labour party is to consolidate the intention of the Leader of the Opposition to be seen to support the police, it must do several things. First, the Leader of the Opposition must stop local Labour chieftains mounting attacks on the police that simply are not justified. The hon. Gentleman knows of what I speak. He knows that there is a limit to what his party can do. The Leader of the Opposition should dissociate himself from the violent attacks that are made persistently on the police by Labour councillors up and down the country.

He must denounce and, if possible, remove the block by some Labour councillors on policemen visiting schools. He must dissociate himself from the vast majority of GLC leaflets that depict the police as racists and oppressors of gays. He must get rid of any support in his party for the reggae record which has been sent round many youth clubs and which contains violent language directed against the police.

Above all, what he must do in the House is to withdraw the Labour party's three-line Whip against the prevention of terrorism legislation because without that in present circumstances the police cannot hope to protect any British Government, whatever its complexion, or their visitors from terrorist attack. He should repudiate the Labour party's commitment to disband the special patrol group, without which the Metropolitan police cannot cope with violent mobs. He should get rid of the commitment to dismantle or run down the special branch whose undercover work is indispensable, as he must know. Above all, he should also abandon Labour's policy of placing the police under local political control. What that means in practice the police have already seen at close hand in the attempts of the South Yorkshire Labour party to take away their crowd control horses and of the Manchester Labour party to make the local chief constable give up his force's baton rounds.

If the Labour party will do those things and at the same time call off the vendettas which its local councils pursue against the police, the Government should respond, as my right hon. Friend has already suggested he will do, by resisting the temptation for law and order to become again the battleground of politics. There is nothing the police need more than a truce between the parties on this issue. To have any chance of stemming, much less reversing, the rising tide of crime and violence we need to reconstruct a national consensus on policing. That is the copper card that all parties should be playing.

7.17 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). I agreed with parts of it and I disagreed with other parts. The assessment, at the end, of the attitude of the ordinary rank and file policeman was not entirely unpredictable and not totally persuasive as an impartial judgment. On the other hand, on the basis of his contribution today I am prepared to accept that the hon. Gentleman spoke at great length when he last spoke to the police conference.

The Home Secretary was right to stress the need to try to create partnership in tackling the problem of crime prevention. There must be a substantial measure of common ground between us that we must have the maximum public and community involvement if we are to do anything about tackling the level of crime.

[Mr. John Cartwright]

All of us have an interest. We all suffer from crime, some people directly because they are attacked on the streets or their homes are broken into. It is a sad fact that in my constituency some of my neighbours have had their homes broken into two or three times during the last couple of years. My constituency office has been broken into twice in less than a year.

Others suffer crime indirectly, through the fear of crime. On that point, the figures quoted by the commissioner in his 1986 strategy report were extremely frightening. The report suggests that about 68 per cent. of Londoners now fear having their homes broken into, 63 per cent. fear having their homes or property damaged, and 62 per cent. fear being mugged or robbed. That is an indication of the problems that crime presents to many ordinary Londoners.

Other people have to bear the cost of crime through higher insurance premiums and through paying for repairs. All of us are involved and must share the responsibility for tackling crime. We cannot simply say that it is a matter for the police, and they should get on with it.

One vital area of co-operation is between local authorities and the police. From my experience in local government I know that in the past too many council decisions have been taken without any thought for crime prevention. Deck access flats, for example, are a godsend to criminals wanting to make a rapid getaway, and the confusing layout of many council estates makes it all too easy for rapid escapes, especially when the approach of police cars can be seen at some distance. The underpasses probably looked good on architects' drawing boards in the 1960s, but they have become a mugger's delight. Similarly, in the 1960s underground car parking probably seemed a sensible solution to the car park problem, but in many of our urban areas it is a vandal's delight and an opportunity for arsonists. In many areas underground car parks are now completely burnt out or fenced off as being too dangerous to use.

The fittings of many council houses, such as louvred windows and glass-pannelled front doors, are a doddle for young criminals to break through. The latest worrying development in my constituency is related to lofts above the top floor of blocks of flats, where there must be trapdoor access. Criminals are now discovering that they can break in through the trapdoor and smash through the ceilings of the flat below the loft. We must tackle that worrying problem.

Local authorities must accept that they need to repair vandalised property quickly in order to maintain standards and prevent invitations for further criminal activities. To leave property empty is an invitation to criminals both to vandalise the empty property and to use it as a springboard to break into neighbouring flats and maisonettes.

All that leads me to argue that there may well be a case for establishing crime prevention units within the management of major local authorities. They would co-ordinate the planning and decision taking of the various council departments to ensure that we feed into the system the needs and requirements of crime prevention at the right time—when key decisions are being taken—so that we do not discover too late that we have a problem which we did not think about when the decisions were on the drawing board.

Crime prevention units could heighten public awareness of the need for crime prevention, and the need to back up police campaigns and offer practical advice and assistance to local people. When anybody suggests a new element in local government, there is immediate suspicion of another gigantic piece of bureaucracy with a great committee structure on top. I see no need for that if we have crime prevention units. I would have thought that they have fewer resource implications than some police units and police committees that have appeared in local government during the past few years, and that have not been so much concerned with crime prevention as with harassing and making life difficult for the police.

Moreover, crime prevention units could be cost-effective. They could reduce the direct costs to an authority of vandalism and of repairing the effects of house-breaking and related crime. At the same time, they may help to reduce insurance premiums. We should consider seriously establishing crime prevention units in local authorities.

I have had some experience of crime prevention panels. They undertake useful and worthwhile initiatives, such as property-marking campaigns. On the whole, I have found that they are not particularly well resourced, they have administrative problems, and, sometimes, appear to lack a clear, decisive, cohesive role. If one had crime prevention units in a local authority, crime prevention panels could be brought under their umbrella and so made more effective.

I endorse what the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) said about many of our worrying crime problems being on our council estates. I shall touch on three issues under that heading. The first relates to entryphone systems. They are badly needed, but sometimes people tend to believe that they solve all problems. A great deal depends on the quality of the system, and how the local authority goes about installing it. It is important to explain to tenants how the system works and what part they must play in it. Far too often tenants do not understand it or become sloppy and allow people in, without checking it. Secondly, local authorities have installed highly technical systems which promptly go wrong, and the whole benefit of the arrangement is destroyed. Thirdly, and most important, any entryphone system in council blocks of flats must be sufficiently robust to withstand the vandalism to which it will probably be subjected. If we can do something along those lines, entryphones will have a part to play in improving life for many council tenants.

I agree with the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) that resident caretakers are far better than mobile caretakers. No politics is involved because councils of all political persuasions have in the past chosen mobile caretakers. On the whole, my experience is that trade unions prefer mobile caretakers for obvious reasons. If one wants some sort of presence on a council estate, a resident caretaker is essential. We cannot expect caretakers to take on violent criminals, but they must have rapid contact with the police to call on them when they are needed.

One of the most worrying aspects of crime on council estates is the difficulty of persuading people to give evidence. All too often people know who the trouble-makers, vandals and burglars are, but are extremely nervous about giving evidence in court. They fear that the criminal will be bound over or will have a fine to pay, and

will come back on the streets. They fear for their property and families if they give evidence. I find that deeply worrying.

There is an urgent need to devolve more power to council house tenants. Localised self-management by tenants through bodies such as tenants' co-operatives creates pride in the community and an atmosphere in which crime and criminals are deterred. I agree that a tenants' charter is the right approach. The more power and responsibility we give to council tenants, the more interest they take and the more we create the climate of opinion which many of us want to see.

There are now about 2,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in the Metropolitan police area and the Metropolitan police are evaluating that approach. Even at this stage one can see some clear benefits. Public awareness is certainly increased, the schemes involve more people, and definitely appear to improve relationships between the public and the police. My subjective investigations seem to show that the results are good. People seem to be more comfortable and settled where such a scheme is in operation, and to believe that it has a useful role to play.

The sad but predictable fact is that most of the schemes are well-established in comfortable middle-class owner-occupied nighbourhoods. That is inevitable because that is where they are easiest to run. The sad fact is that the schemes are much more necessary on council estates. If we are to start effective neighbourhood watch schemes on council estates, we need to put more resources and greater effort behind them. Incidentally, I regret the knocking reaction of some Labour authorities to the whole concept. I do not suggest that neighbourhood watch is the answer to all our problems, but it is taking us in the right direction. The more support and pressure that is put behind it, the more effective it will be.

The Home Secretary in opening referred to the fact that a great many householders have totally inadequate protection against crime, including inadequate door locks. Although I am not one of those who support the idea of making general grants available to all householders to improve security, I think that there is a special case for those who are most at risk and have the least resources. I refer specifically to pensioners who are on supplementary benefit. When I have tried to persuade the Department of Health and Social Security that it ought to be prepared to make a single payment for the installation of much needed locks and security equipment in private homes, its attitude has been that single payments are not available for that sort of approach; it is something for which the householder should have saved from supplementary benefit throughout the years.

Anybody who has lived on supplementary benefit will understand how difficult it is to expect someone to save anything. It is certainly not sufficient for the installation of proper, efficient and effective door locks. When the Minister replies, I hope that he will take that issue on board and see whether he can persuade the Department to include sensible security arrangements in the items to be covered by a single payment for those really in need.

I have one other personal comment that arises from something that the Home Secretary said about clear-up rates which, in respect of burglary and housebreaking in the London area, are still depressing. I want to repeat a comment that I have made to the commissioner and certainly to the Home Secretary on more than one occasion. I refer to the problem that is created for many ordinary people who, when they suffer this sad and traumatic experience of having their homes broken into, find that the police response is something less than they had expected. There is sometimes lengthy delay before the police arrive and, when they do, it is a cursory examination and they give the impression that there is very little that can be done. The follow-up is usually nothing at all.

I understand the problems of the police. The sums involved may be comparatively small but to the person concerned this is a desperately sad and depressing experience. I understand the pressure on the police, but some sensible level of concern and an attempt to follow through is crucial in this important area of public-police relationships. If the aim is to encourage confidence in the police, in the matter of training and the attitude of supervisory officers in the force, I hope that we will try to ensure that the ordinary policeman on the beat who is involved in such incidents gives the impression that, even if the matter is a minor one and one of many to have happened that day, he is concerned and regards it as important, because that is what it is to the person who has suffered from the crime.

As I said at the beginning, I think that the Home Secretary is right to try to build a partnership against crime throughout society. I think that the Government are broadly on the right lines. They need more resources, and in some respects their approach would be improved by more adventurous methods and techniques. I hope that the Minister will be open-minded about new suggestions coming forward from whatever source.

The message that we should send out from the House, I believe, is that we are searching for some measure of agreement. We shall disagree on a great many things about policing and crime, but we ought to be searching for some substantial measure of common ground from which we can launch a crime prevention campaign. I am convinced that, for many of our constituents, crime prevention is far too important to become a simple political football.

7.33 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate.

I had hoped to speak in the debate on prisons on Tuesday. Having read the report of Tuesday's debate, I notice that very few Back Benchers were successful in speaking, so I imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I would have been unlikely to catch your eye. I had hoped to speak about Northeye prison and the happenings there last week. As it turned out, I could not attend Tuesday's debate because I had a happy duty in my constituency when the Queen Mother came to open a section of the electrified railway line. I am therefore hoping to have the opportunity to dwell at some length on the events last week in Northeye prison. I base that hope on the fact that there has been no outburst of criminal activity in my constituency such as we saw within the perimeter fence of Northeye for many years.

If the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) does not mind, I shall not dwell on what he said beyond agreeing that everybody must be given a sense of responsibility for tackling crime. I agree that one of the real local problems is persuading people to come forward and give evidence not just to the police but in magistrates courts. In conversations with the local police in my

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

constituency, I have been told time and again that they come across people who, after a first experience in a magistrates court, say that too much time has been taken and that the treatment meted out is such that they are reluctant to go back. That is a bad thing, and efforts must be made to correct it.

Any debate on crime prevention must take into account the trend in the past 30 years or more, to which a number of hon. Members have alluded, of a 5 to 7 per cent. annual growth rate in crime. Against that background, the Government have made important progress on a number of fronts in the past seven years in a fashion unmatched by the previous Labour Government. I wish to comment on some aspects of the progress that has been made, apart from prisons, and then turn to the happenings at Northeye.

The first thing that arises in the list of the Government's achievements is crime prevention. We have already heard today about neighbourhood watch schemes. There are already more than 9,000 such schemes. They have achieved wide popularity and, in certain areas, have brought down the local burglary rate. That seems to be the early experience in my constituency where a number of such schemes have been implemented, particularly in Bexhill, and notably at Cooden within Bexhill.

Crime prevention schemes under the community programme are very important, as is the greater emphasis that has been placed on public awareness of the need for security with, for example, insurance companies providing incentives for people to take security measures. It is surprising how few people bother to do so.

Most important in regard to crime prevention, I am sure, is that a greater awareness should be built up in schools. It is essential that the police should continue with the good work that they have begun in schools so that youngsters from the earliest stages realise that they should have a sense of responsibility about crime prevention.

With regard to support for the police, the Government's record speaks for itself. In the past seven years, spending on the police force has risen from £1·1 billion to £2·8 billion. There are 14,000 extra staff in the police, most of whom are police officers. As to court powers, there has been much progress with the Criminal Justice Act 1982 and the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, but I am bound to say that I am one Member of the House who believes that more progress is needed.

I feel that society would be safer and more responsible if capital punishment for murder were reintroduced. I also think that there should be tougher sentences for rape and crimes of violence. I hope that those subjects will not be lost on this Parliament and future Parliaments.

The Government have done a great deal to help victims. It is a sobering fact in a sense that compensation for victims has increased by more than 250 per cent. in the past five years. What the Government have done in tackling the drugs problem is essential to crime prevention, first and foremost, in the education of youngsters who make up the greater part of the potential market for drug traffickers and, secondly, by cracking down on the drug traffickers themselves.

The Government's determination to tackle the problems of law and order contrast sharply with the ambivalent attitude of the Labour party. It is all very well attaching a law and order label to the Labour party's new public relations image, as we have heard this afternoon and in the past week, but that does not fit with many of the remarks made in the past several weeks by Opposition Front Bench spokesmen. It fits even less well with the comments made by some prospective Labour party candidates such as Mr. Livingstone, Mr. Bernie Grant, Mr. Boateng and many others—not to forget examples of other prominent members of the Labour party such as Mr. Scargill and many more.

It is not just the Labour party that falls down in that regard. I heard with interest what the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) said, but I remind him that at the time of the Handsworth riots the president of the Social Democratic party quickly appeared on television and said that South Africa had come to the streets of Britain, as if the Handsworth riots could be excused in the name of social deprivation. That is muddled thinking. There was no social deprivation to speak of in Handsworth. Millions of pounds of Government money had been invested in that suburb of Birmingham in the form of new housing. It is dangerous to attach such notions to the problem of violent crime and riot.

Many Opposition Members say that unemployment is the principal cause of violent crime, but if they look back to the 1930s they will see that the parallel simply is not there. My view is that crime continues to rise because our society has created a climate of permissiveness over the past 30 or 40 years. There is more affluence in our society but also more rootlessness. There is greater freedom, but less of a sense of responsibility at school and in the home, and less of a sense of individual obligation. We know that television glamourises violence. I had great sympathy for the private Member's Bill introduced recently with the object of reducing the amount of violence shown on television.

Most important, however, reliance on the state and at the same time a corresponding resentment against the overwhelming authority that the state represents underlies much of the increase in crime. In the past seven years the Government have done a great deal to change society's attitude by creating opportunities once again, and building individual choice into our way of life. We have seen it in many forms — in council house purchases, matters affecting trade union membership, and many other areas of everyday life. That augurs well for society. In the longer run, that sense of individial responsibility will reinforce the nation's will to play a more responsible part in everyday life and therefore in crime prevention.

I now refer to the part that our prison service should play in the overall scheme of crime prevention, and I should like to talk about Northeye prison. The prison was converted from a Royal Air Force camp in 1968 and opened as a category C prison. Much local anxiety was expressed at the time, as I know full well because my parents lived within a mile of the site then. Originally it was designed for 250 prisoners and later it accommodated up to 450. The prisoners were housed in 28 huts, most of which were wartime billets, and other amenities were developed at the camp. There is a perimeter fence, which has been breached more often than it should have been. Time and again there have been stories in the local press of prisoners getting through or over the fence and away across the Pevensey marshes. It may not seem so funny now in view of the events of last week, but there was wry humour in Bexhill not so long ago when people were apprehended getting into the prison to join a drugs party.

Most of the prisoners are serving sentences of six months to three years. Some have served longer sentences elsewhere and have been transferred for the final stages of their term of imprisonment for good conduct.

Northeye prison was not immediately accepted by the Bexhill community, but a great deal of good work was done by the governor for local public relations and by the board of visitors, which continues to be active on the prison's behalf. An excellent sports hall has been developed at Northeye and there was a boost to local trade from the presence of a small community of prison officers.

Nevertheless, four inter-related problems have arisen at Northeye over the past two years. The first is the number of escapes, to which I have alluded, and the second is the drugs problem. In several prisons such as Northeye, no matter how hard the prison officers work, visitors can, do, and have continued to bring drugs into the prison at visiting time. Also, as the perimeter is surrounded by a public footpath, it is not difficult for people to toss drugs over the fence into an area that the prisoners can reach without difficulty.

There has also been a problem of violence, which has been growing mainly because of the large turnover of the prison population. Not all those coming to Northeye are natural candidates for a category C prison. Two hundred were sent back by the governor last year and this year the rate of rejection has been about four a week. The prisoner arrives, and is processed into the prison, and it may take several days before his true nature is revealed. That presents a problem.

The fourth area is undoubtedly staffing ratios. The prison service carried out a manpower survey in June 1984, and in June 1985 it confirmed that the full complement of prison officers at Northeye should be 55, but as there are plenty of demands from other prisons as the prison building programme expanded and more prison places came on stream, Northeye contented itself with a smaller strength. Recently it has been operating satisfactorily with a complement of 37 or 38, of which two officers were sometimes seconded to help at London prisons. A great deal of overtime was worked by those prison officers, and at Northeye it has recently averaged 16 hours a week. When prison officers have been on prolonged sick leave, the prisoners' activities have had to be restricted. That always presents a potential threat.

After the manpower survey was completed, approved and agreed, an inner security fence was promised as a matter of priority. The Government approved the building of that fence in the past financial year. I know that for a fact because I received confirmation in writing from my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. The fence should have been built but it has not been built to this day. The purpose of the fence was to divide the accommodation units from the other units, which were destroyed last week.

Against that background of a staff shortage but a workable arrangement at Northeye, it is worth bearing in mind that there have been several years' progress in the prison service in terms of resources afforded by the Government. Expenditure on the prison service in the past seven years has increased by 85 per cent. In real terms, allowing for inflation, that is an increase of one third. In the current year the budget is about £639 million, which is 8 per cent. up on last year.

As was said in the debate on Tuesday, the number of prison officers has been increasing. There has been an 18 per cent. increase since 1979 while the number of prisoners has risen by 12 per cent. Last year about 1,100 new prison officers were taken into the service so that the total is now about 18,700. Thanks in part to the overtime that those prison offices are working, they receive on average pay of about £15,000 a year. They are part of a service in which five new prisons were opened in 1985-86, with 15 more earmarked for opening by the early 1990s. In addition, 10,000 existing cells are being refurbished.

What really happened at Northeye last week, and why did it happen? The problem started at 6 pm. It is significant that that is exactly the same time as the prison officers' overtime ban was due to begin. From that point on, there was nothing but chaos, or it would have been chaos but for the prompt action of the prison governor, his staff on duty and the police. I visited the prison at 2.30 am and spent part of the night outside the perimeter fence with the Sussex police and the governor. The following morning, I inspected what was left of Northeye prison as the prisoners had been moved away. I inspected the charred ruins with the governor and senior police officers.

What happened at Northeye was that the chief officer was on duty when the overtime ban took effect with four ordinary prison officers and one senior officer—six men —in charge of 445 people. No sooner had the overtime ban begun than some of the prisoners appeared wearing masks, having taken baseball bats from the sports centre, and began breaking into the canteen. At that point, following a pre-planned strategy, the chief officer got in touch with the governor and courageously secured the release from the detention unit of two prisoners who had been locked up for their safety because they had transgressed the inmates' rules about paying for tobacco. He got those two prisoners, who otherwise would have suffered terribly, out of the unit and removed the other prison officers outside the perimeter fence. The police came along rapidly and contained the outbreak.

The prisoners inside Northeye went on the rampage and began to put everything to fire. They left their accommodation units, the chapel and the sports hall intact, but every other building at Northeye was burned and completely destroyed—the workshops, the canteen, the welfare centre with its records, and the hospital after the drugs had been removed and drug cocktails made up to egg the prisoners on. It seems that a hard core of about 30 prisoners were responsible for all that happened. Most of the rest, at a fairly early stage, surrendered to the authorities outside the perimeter fence, and 10 others escaped across the marshes.

Why did it happen? Last week, I said in the House that it was important that the issue should not be prejudged and that there should be an inquiry, but I am bound to raise two points, the first being the focus of media attention on the prison officers' overtime ban. There is no doubt that last week the prisoners at Northeye and other prisoners could gear themselves up for their criminal violence because they knew exactly when the overtime ban was due to start. It must also be said that prison officers, who are experienced men, must have known precisely what could easily happen. It must also be said that, at Northeye, as soon as the prison officers heard that there was trouble, those following the overtime ban immediately returned to work and pledged total support to the governor until the problem had been resolved, but by then the damage had been done.

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

In the face of the excellent Government policy of allocating more resources to prisons such as Northeye, and offering so much support, why did the industrial action arise and the dispute take place that led to so much wanton criminal destruction? My view is that regional and central management in the prison service lacks sufficient management and leadership skills. If we remember that the problem of allowing a mix of prisoners at a category C prison had got out of hand, and that pressure was mounting over escapes and violence—pressures that the board of visitors identified and the governor had long identified, and to which I referred in correspondence with Ministers—we must ask ourselves how the pressure could have arisen, bearing in mind that there are substantial resources in the prison service.

I discussed the issue with the deputy regional director when he visited Bexhill at my request last year, and I also asked about the failure to build the fence that the Government had authorised. In that area, as with negotiations on staffing ratios, the management of the prison service leaves something to be desired. In any industry where people have been earning overtime for a prolonged period and there is a request that the system should change so that less overtime will be earned, there is bound to be tension and misgivings. The position at Northeye and other prisons was not much different from that in comparable industrial situations.

The difference at Northeye is that the orders from regional management tended to be what I described as orders given in a macho climate. They were terse orders. There was little explanation or scope for discussion and debate. Although the Government made the right decisions about allocating resources, the necessary changes, including reductions in overtime, were not implemented smoothly enough because industrial relations were tense. The working environment of the prison officer is an area in which rumours abound and where men are required to appear tough. What was needed was a little more patience, planning and thoroughness in negotiations on the part of regional management.

That being the case, wherever the Government increase resources it is important that the management of the public sector should be watched carefully to ensure that it is up to the challenge of implementing the large-scale improvements that the Government have authorised. I can think of several areas where that has happened. As parliamentary private secretary to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, I am not allowed by custom to talk about that area, but I hope it will not matter if I say that at least in the National Health Service positive steps have been taken to introduce better management. Where large sums of Government money flow into the public sector, it is important that the management does not stand still but that steps are taken to improve it. There is potential for the regional and central management of the prison service to enlarge its skills.

In the debate on Tuesday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State put his finger on the point when he said:

"The service faces many problems . . . but it has two relatively new assets of which we have to make the best possible use. The first is the willingness of the Government to invest substantial resources in the service. The second is the realisation . . . that by changing to more sensible ways of running prisons further resources can be released."

In replying to the debate, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State said:

"All that increased expenditure needs to be based on a proper and efficient system in the prisons so that those who work in the prisons do so according to modern and not outdated industrial relations practices. That is what the Government are tackling." —[*Official Report*, 6 May 1986; Vol. 97, c. 47-73.]

Indeed, that is what the Government are tackling. If they concentrate upon the prison service, that is one area in which there will be no repeat of the disorder, violence and lawlessness that occurred last week in several prisons, especially at Northeye. If we get the management of public sector resources right, especially in the prison service, we should have greater value for money. If we apply that principle to the crime prevention effort as a whole, society will be much better off.

7.58 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) could not speak in the debate on prisons. The moral is not to throw away one's notes since it might be possible to regurgitate them on a subsequent occasion.

We debate a vital matter when we deal with the prevention of crime. The level of crime and, sometimes even more importantly, the fear of crime damages and detracts from the quality of life of those whom we represent. Crime has increased by 40 per cent. since the Government came to office. There are now 10,000 more crimes every day than when Labour left office.

The principal job of the police is combating crime. For whatever reason, in many ways, they are not doing it very well. In London the clear-up rate is only 17 per cent. Fewer than one in five crimes is solved. That is lower than for the rest of the country. The Metropolitan police are at the bottom of the league for crime prevention.

Since 1979, Government spending on the police has increased in real terms by 40 per cent.—that is the same figure as the increase in crime. Police pay, police clothing, police weaponry, police vehicles and police numbers have had favourable attention. Police manpower is larger by 10,400 than it was six years ago. The police are highly paid. For example, an ordinary constable costs more than a Member of Parliament. In return, we are right to expect the highest standards of professional conduct and the police to act strictly within the law.

Effective policing and the solving of crime can be achieved only with public co-operation and consent. That basic truth is accepted by everyone who understands anything about such matters. Recent police actions are damaging, jeopardising and destroying co-operation with and public confidence in the police. The police cannot, as I saw them do, rampage through the streets of Wapping and expect those on the receiving ends of truncheons and horses hooves to co-operate with community policing the next day as if nothing had happened.

Let us understand that those thousands of workers who have been robbed of their jobs by Murdoch—a totally unscrupulous employer who sacked his entire work force without a penny of compensation—have a perfect right to protest and demonstrate. What sort of people do we think they are? Would the House have them do anything else? Would the House expect British people, who stood up to tyrants such as Hitler, to lay down passively and be trampled on by industrial butchers such as Murdoch? Of course not. They will not do so. When those workers,

many of whom are women, exercise their freedom to protest and demonstrate, they are not criminals, enemies of the state to be beaten up at will by riot police and trampled on by horses. They are decent, honest citizens who pay rates and taxes. They should have the protection of the House.

In this free country, demonstrating is not a criminal offence. If certain police officers act as though it were, they will, deservedly, lose public support. They will certainly lose mine. If they thus forfeit public support, they will be inhibited in their ability to fight crime. It should be explained to senior police officers that it is a traditional democratic freedom in this country to march through the streets and to hold open air meetings. They should understand that those freedoms serve a vital function in our democracy. They bring issues and grievances to the attention of the public, the media and the authorities. They allow citizens to express their solidarity with one another. They are an accepted form of expression, representing a demand on those in power, and they lead, ideally, to the peaceful resolution of conflict.

I shall tell the House what happened last Saturday night. The main road running past the Murdoch plant at Wapping is The Highway. One parade came along that road from the east and another approached from the west, having come from the embankment. When the parades met, at about 10 pm, there was an incident. The incident lasted only seconds. The police say that some missiles were thrown, as was a smoke bomb. At this, immediately, and, I emphasise, without any warning, the mounted police charged at a gallop up and down The Highway, scattering everyone—men, women and children. The police would be expected to react. One would have hoped for an intelligent response, but, by any standards, that was a wild over-reaction. However, that was just a minor beginning.

The mounted police occupied The Highway. The crowd had moved up Wellclose street, which leads off The Highway and into Wellclose square, both making a cul de sac, and into the adjoining park where there was a speakers' platform. Here they posed no threat to the police or anyone else. Yet after a pause, and completely unnecessarily, there were further cavalry charges. Then, most inexplicably of all, with the people penned into the cul de sac, a large force of riot police, with helmets and visors, short shields and truncheons, appeared opposite Wellclose street. For a few minutes, they did a sort of war dance, rather like footballers coming out on to the field. With absolutely no provocation, and absolutely no warning, they made a charge in a V-formation into the people, knocking everybody flying with truncheons and shields.

There were many injuries. Even more inexplicably, without any justification whatsoever, the police made repeated charges in that manner, at intervals, for hours. I repeat, for hours! I do not understand that. It was a scene of the utmost, sickening brutality. I found it difficult to believe what I was seeing or to believe that it was in England. Despite appeals from speakers on the platform, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), for calm and order, and for the police to withdraw, the charges continued regularly.

There were, inevitably, many casualties. The following day, I received a preliminary list, which I have with me, with the names and addresses of 44 injured persons. There were 24 head injuries, one eye injury, one broken jaw, two leg injuries, two of severe shock, and 13 injuries were unknown. One person collapsed on arrival at work. Another had a heart attack. Since then, I have received another long list of injuries. When the ambulances arrived, they were impeded by police. What is even more difficult to explain is that the police would not let anyone leave.

I left the platform, where I had observed everything, and tried, around midnight, to leave at the back of Wellclose square. I was told by a line of riot police that no one could leave. I asked why and was told that that was their order. After I introduced myself, I spoke to a superior officer. He asked me whether I was alone, and let me out. Had I wanted to take a crowd away from Wapping, I would not have been allowed to do so. Police were keeping people penned in for hours and repeatedly, and violently, baton charging them without the slightest shred of justification or reason. If that had occurred in Poland or South Africa, it would have been headline news and reported in terms of outrage.

What possible explanation can there be for such appalling behaviour? The only explanation I can think of is that it was an exercise in intimidation—people would be so beaten and assaulted that they would be deterred from going back. When I tell people about that, I get two reactions. First, they can hardly believe that it happened. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield gave his account of events, I noticed that the Home Secretary laughed. The Home Secretary did not believe my right hon. Friend. Hon. Members might not believe that such things happen in England, but I was there and I know what happened. It was a disgrace and scandal.

Secondly, people say, "In future, you should stay away. If that is what it is like, do not go to Wapping" or, in other words, allow the police arbitrarily to abolish the right to demonstrate. That is a dangerous doctrine, because the demonstrators had a perfect right to be there. Parliament has declared no state of emergency and the Riot (Defence) Act 1886 no longer exists. In acting as they did, the police acted outside the law. It was the police who breached public order. Their action led to less, not more, order. The law says that truncheons should be used only in self-defence or to resist violence—neither condition existed. The riot police were breaching the law and the peace, not defending them. Countless people—women and men—were hit on their heads, not their bodies. The riot police in effect declared war on the printers, injuring and taking them prisoner.

At Peterloo 150 years ago, in similar circumstances and with similar motives, the Army sent its cavalry into a peaceful crowd. The press proved capable of outrage then, and so should we in the House today. It was not all that long ago that we saw police at Stonehenge—I was not there but I saw on my television screen what happened — truncheoning men, women and children. Last Saturday's police action was indiscriminate and brutal. It was a scandal and a disgrace and intolerable. We cannot possibly accept or endorse it.

There will be other consequences. The demonstrators have asked me, "Are we expected to remain passive and to allow ourselves to be beaten up? Are we to be used as punch bags or for target practice and not retaliate?" I am not sure what my answer should be. Should we not wear crash helmets for protection if, when we go to meetings, we are to be beaten on the head? That will encourage an escalation of violence and lead to a more violent society.

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

It is now clear that special paramilitary units are available to be deployed against gatherings of civilians whose congregation is disliked by senior police officers — officers who, in practice, are not answerable to anyone. These special units are trained out of the public view and in tactics that have yet to be divulged publicly to anyone. Those tactics obviously include maiming and injuring innocent persons, to disperse them in violation of the law.

The Metropolitan police at Wapping are behaving with intolerable arrogance. They appear to be unanswerable and unaccountable to anyone. They show a cavalier indifference to public concern and seem unrestrained by any democratic process. Because their tactics are evolved privately and in secret, when they go wrong—as they certainly did last Saturday—no one is called to account. The police seem to be an unaccountable law unto themselves. The notional accountability, through the Home Secretary, to Parliament is a farce. The finances of the police are not presented to Parliament. Their accounts are not submitted by independent auditors. Even parliamentary questions are dodged. There is an overweening power within the state that is currently unaccountable, in effect, to anyone and at present is behaving in a way that is totally intolerable to the decent British people whose taxes pay their salaries.

This appalling behaviour must be brought under control. I want to hear less talk about a police force and more about a police service. I want more police on the beat in my constituency tackling crime, stopping burglaries and preventing muggings, not acting as auxiliaries to the unscrupulous industrial mugger, Rupert Murdoch. The present behaviour of the riot police at Wapping does incredible harm to the reputation and credibility of the police. It must be brought under control. The riot squad must be withdrawn completely and permanently. Its presence is extremely damaging and it is singularly inappropriate in an industrial dispute.

I should like to thank the Minister of State, Home Office—the hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw)—for this morning receiving me and my trade union friends so courteously. I hope that he will review what we said to him. I hope that he will consider in particular that there is no reason to use the riot police and the tactics that they are trained to use. They are inappropriate in an industrial dispute. Union members would not bring their wives and children on their marches and parades if their object was to cause violence and mayhem. The riot police are therefore inappropriate.

We are told that action should be taken under existing procedures, but how do we take action against riot police who cannot be identified because they cannot be recognised under their helmets and visors? I am told that if a policeman has an overall on he cannot have a number on his shoulder. These days, people just pin on badges. There is no reason why a policeman should not have a badge which shows his number and which he can pin on his overall.

There should be a public inquiry, because this issue will not go away. The television companies and journalists will start looking at the incidents. The Government must realise that Wapping is only two miles down the road and that, next time, there will be television companies and observers of every type. If the riot squad come out again and behave in that frenzied and indiscriminate way, when they beat up even their own policemen, it will be an appalling tragedy and will do incredible damage to the police.

I beg the Minister to believe that we are telling the truth. It is no good laughing as the Home Secretary did when my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield explained what happened. I know that we find it difficult to believe that this happened in Britain with British police, but it did, and it must never happen again.

8.17 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) will forgive me if I do not follow the theme that he eloquently pursued in his speech, much of which reiterated what was said by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I do not deny a worker's right to march or to demonstrate, but I question whether it is altogether wise to bring wives or children to a demonstration and whether it is wise to come to a demonstration with a smoke bomb in one's pocket.

The debate is about crime prevention rather than Wapping, so I shall revert to the general theme. I apologise for not having been present during the opening speeches by the Front-Bench spokesmen. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle), I am a governmental fag and was therefore hard at work in my Minister's office when the Front Benchers spoke. I understand that their speeches were entirely predictable, but none the worse for that.

When we consider crime, the old cliché that prevention is better than cure is not only true but shows what a very apt title we have for this debate. Unemployment has already been mentioned by a number of hon. Members. I do not accept the theory that the increase in detected crime in recent years is largely due to higher unemployment, but I believe that there is a relationship between crime and unemployment. Another truism that cannot be ignored is that the devil will find work for idle hands.

Before turning to the main subject of my speech, I should like to leave with the House a few thoughts about how to cope with the impact of forced idleness on crime. If one wants proof that the devil will find work for idle hands, one needs to look only at the Wapping scenario that was described by the hon. Member for Newham, North-East. I acknowledge that there is no quick solution to the unemployment problem. Even if there were to be a radical change in policy, nothing could be done to haul down the unemployment figures quickly. However, something could be done to ensure that there are as few idle hands as possible.

I do not know how many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have heard of the workfare schemes that are being tried out in the United States. A recent television programme graphically described these schemes. A wide variety of such schemes, now in operation in the United States, come under the general heading of workfare. They have in common the aim of enabling welfare benefit recipients to do useful work in return for benefit. Most of the schemes are still at an early or experimental stage and cover only a proportion of welfare benefit recipients. However, they are well received. In nine cases out of 10 the unemployed are happy to take part in the workfare schemes, which are usually to be found in the public sector. The overriding rule is that they are not allowed to

take work off regular workers. If redundancies are due, the trade unions in the United States — which otherwise accept workfare—say that the workfare employees must go before employees who are trade union members have to leave. That is fair enough. It is a small price to pay for trade union co-operation.

Workfare surely answers the plea that it is better to make people work than to pay them not to work. Workfare does not cure the unemployment disease, but it goes some way towards killing the pain. It can also help to occupy idle hands, and thereby remove what some people regard as one of the many causes of crime.

I am pleased that the Department of Employment is studying the American experience of workfare schemes to discover whether they have any application in this country. I believe that they have. I should be pleased to know whether the Home Office would be prepared to take on the responsibility, in conjunction with the Department of Employment and the Department of Health and Social Security, of looking at such schemes.

I agree that much crime can be prevented. I applaud what the Government have done to deter criminals. The fact is that 14,000 more policemen, a third more resources and a tougher sentencing policy, particularly for violent crimes, have all played their part. But most crime is against property—95 per cent. of it, I believe. Much of that is opportunist and could be prevented by what I describe as good neighbourliness and community policing. That is what I intend to speak about this evening—and also the effect that such a policy has on manpower, particularly in my county of Hampshire. I should, perhaps, refer to two counties. My police authority encompasses both Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, the so-called twin counties.

The crime prevention unit that was set up in 1983 by the Home Secretary has led to new initiatives, such as local crime prevention projects. Five of them are now under way in different areas. It has also led to the greater use of preventive techniques, such as neighbourhood watch. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on so eloquently singing the praises of neighbourhood watch schemes.

A key element in crime prevention is community policing. Most police forces are trying to forge closer and more co-operative relationships between themselves and the public whom they protect. Some of the community policing schemes are experimental, such as that in Exeter which goes back as far as 1976. However, they are becoming much more commonplace. John Alderson, who was the chief constable of Devon and Cornwall in 1976, described community policing as

"a 'preventive' and not an 'enforcement' mechanism."

I think that he was right. He did not invent community policing, as perhaps he would have us believe. Ever since Peel, British police have been community policemen. Now we want the public whom they protect to be more positively involved in protecting one another through preventing crime. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) said that the essence of community policing is policing by consent. All hon. Members would agree about that.

I questioned my hon. Friend the Minister of State recently about neighbourhood watch schemes and I was very pleased with his reply. He told us that 3,850 neighbourhood watch schemes are now operated in the shire counties. That is more than double the number that was recorded in January 1985. Indeed, 9,300 neighbourhood watch schemes are now in operation throughout England and Wales. Although there has not been a detailed analysis of their effect upon the crime rate, the first results are very encouraging. I have heard that a scheme in Chatham received the support of 90 per cent. of the 1,250 dwellings on a housing estate and that crime there fell by 50 per cent. during the first nine months of its operation.

Other schemes that have been studied show useful reductions in the level of crime, sometimes as high as 50 per cent. However, chief constables are probably wise to proceed cautiously with neighbourhood watch schemes. Where they have proved to be effective, it has become evident that additional policemen are required to support them. I made that point a fortnight ago at Question Time.

That leads me to the general question of police manpower. I wrote to my hon. Friend the Minister of State last January about the effect that the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 is likely to have upon my police authority's manpower requirements. I told him that the Hampshire police authority had carried out trial schemes in order to anticipate the manpower needs that the introduction of the Act would involve to meet the greater administrative demand. The Hampshire police authority thought that a considerable number of police officers would be required if the number of "bobbies" on the beat was not to be depleted. On this trial basis, experience shows that the additional administrative burden imposed upon the police authority by the 1984 Act would warrant an increase in the establishment.

A report has been published only this week. I have not read it, but it shows that the policeman's view of himself is that there is nothing that leads to greater stress than sitting at a desk doing paperwork. Uniformed officers like to be out on the beat.

That leads me to the manpower problem that today faces the Hampshire and Isle of Wight constabulary. I ask for the indugence of the House as I shall be rather parochial in what I am about to say, but I am sure that the problems facing my police authority also face other counties in England and Wales. Mr. Robin Hodgson, the clerk to the police authority, has told me that over the past few years his office has made repeated approaches to the Home Office for an increase in the authorised establishment for the police force covering Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. These requests have been turned down despite the rapidly increasing demands being made on the police. All that the authority is asking for is an increase in uniformed police officers from 3,084 to 3,112 — another 28 policemen. The justification for that relatively moderate increase in establishment stems from the ever increasing demands of the rapidly growing population.

The population of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is currently 1,650,000. That figure includes an increase of 50,000 over the past five years, yet in that time there has been no corresponding increase in the police establishment. Certain areas of the county—notably Basingstoke, Chandlers Ford, Hart, Horndean, Fareham and Totton in my constituency — have experienced especially rapid growth.

Between 1981 and 1985 the chief constable, Mr. John Duke, has reported an increase in recorded crime of 20,000 to a total of 90,000 cases. Over that same period violent crimes increased from 2,514 to 2,977. Some of the

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

additional resulting demand for manpower has been met through civilianisation based on the principles set out in the Home Office circular 114/83.

My police authority has carried out a review of its force headquarters organisation, and the proposals contained in its report have been accepted by the council and can be put into effect without delay or additional funding. However, in the current financial year some 30 more uniformed police officers could be released for outside police duties if the county funds the additional cost of civilian staff at £535,000 and a further £230,000 for the following two financial years, so releasing another 15 uniformed police officers for outside duties.

The authority is committed to these and other measures of civilianisation. That is all good news and entirely consistent with Home Office recommendations, but it can only meet part of the demand for extra policemen on the beat. The authority has therefore made a good case for Home Office approval of an increase in establishment of two inspectors, 12 sergeants and 14 constables — 28 additional officers in all which will cost an additional £363,000. That sum has already been set aside by the county council in its revenue budget for 1986-87 in anticipation of Home Office approval.

My hon. Friend the Minister will have received a letter from the clerk of the police authority setting out in greater detail than I have had time to do this afternoon the case for the increase in establishment supported by charts showing the major influences on manpower over the past decade and figures showing the demand for uniformed patrol constables and sergeants.

That follows an earlier request in 1984 for a modest increase of three sergeants. Those proposals were also self-financing. When the Home Office turned that application down, it said that the Secretary of State would be prepared to reconsider the matter especially in the light of developing proposals to civilianise posts currently filled by police officers. I believe that Hampshire has now more than met the Home Office requests on civilianisation. The Home Secretary's reluctance to approve an increase in Hampshire's establishment may also have been based on the 20 vacancies that existed at that time. There are now only eight vacancies, so that excuse will no longer wash.

We have in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight a police authority that is doing everything that it is being asked of it by the Home Office and more. As a local authority, Hampshire has continued to honour its obligations to a rapidly expanding county in spite of a cut in the rate support grant this year of 6·6 per cent. Hampshire police force has taken the lead in experimenting to find more cost effective ways of preventing crime and catching criminals. Crime may be rising but detections are also increasing. One of the chief constable's greatest worries is the increase in burglary offences. Burglary is a particularly offensive crime and has been the subject of rigorous counter-measures by specially dedicated officers. That shows the deterrent and preventative effect possible in one area when priorities of manpower and counter-measures can be concentrated as they have been for burglary.

The chief constable has said that he wishes he had a greater capability for similar concentrations of manpower. That is what I now request my hon. Friend the Minister to reconsider. I ask him to support my police authority, which has served my county and constituents so well over the years in a continuing climate of expenditure restraint and where the unqualified, unanimous voice of the police and the people they protect demands an enhanced level of service—in other words, more policemen. That is their need, that is my request on their behalf, and that is what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary should enable them to provide.

8.36 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am a little diffident to take part in what appears to be a southern English debate, but I am encouraged to press on by the expansive presence of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone).

A concern for law and order is not and never will be exclusive to one political party. The people of Great Britain, whether they are supporters of the Tory party, Labour party, of my absent colleague the alliance, Plaid Cymru or of the Scottish National party, seek to live in a peaceful and law-abiding community.

No one in this debate has mentioned the failure of successive Administrations to deal with the problems allied to alcohol abuse. A number of hon. Members have sought to establish correlations between certain social and economic phenomena and the crime rate. No one can deny that there is a pronounced correlation between alcohol abuse and a range of criminal activity. Alcohol-induced criminal activities range from involvement in petty crime to homicide.

I would like to consider three areas of crime prevention. I will not be following the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) in his interesting discussion of police manpower. First, I would like to consider petty crime and how we deal with the petty offender, including the mentally ill and chronically alcoholic.

A week ago I asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland what steps the Scottish Office was taking to divert petty offenders, including mentally ill people, from terms of custody. The Under-Secretary of State replied:

> "The Scottish Home and Health Department is monitoring 13 schemes now operating in various sheriff court areas throughout Scotland whereby individuals charged with offences, mainly of a minor nature, who are considered to be likely to benefit from social work help are referred to social work departments as an alternative to prosecution."

Incidentally, I am glad that the Minister has joined us. He also spoke about the relevance of the powers contained in the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980, saying that they

> "enable a policeman, instead of arresting a drunken person suspected of an offence, to take him to a 'designated place' for the care of drunken persons."—[*Official Report*, 2 May 1986; Vol. 96, c. *537-38*.]

By a "designated place", the Minister means a hostel that is manned by trained personnel who can deal with those who are habitually or publicly drunk. The hon. Gentleman may know more about these designated places than I do, but I am given to understand that there is only one, and that is in Aberdeen—although not in Aberdeen, South.

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South) *indicated dissent*.

Dr. Godman: I am sorry, perhaps it is in Aberdeen, South. However, I believe that two more designated places are planned: one in Peterhead and one in the west of Scotland. I may be wrong about that, but we certainly need more of them.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, and am sorry that I missed the beginning of his speech. Another designated place has been announced for Dundee, and I hope that it will be opened later in the year.

Dr. Godman: I am pleased to hear that, and I am sure that police officers in Dundee will also welcome that news. Moreover, I am pretty certain that police officers on the beat in Greenock and Port Glasgow would welcome the setting up of another designated place. More places are needed both north and south of the border.

I am aware that other hon. Members have been as patient as I was when I waited to speak, and so I shall be relatively brief. The violent crime of child abuse is far too prevalant today. More resources should be devoted towards preventing, detecting and treating this social evil. I welcome this week's publication of the draft circular of the DHSS entitled, "Child Abuse—Working Together for the Protection of Children".

Paragraph 7 involves the need to improve resources. It says:

"By ensuring that there is effective child health surveillance for all children in the community and that young parents in particular receive advice and guidance on"—

that dreadful word—

"parenting, much can be done at a primary prevention level to reduce the likelihood of child abuse. If family practitioners, health visitors and other staff in these preventive services are aware also of the signs of possible abuse, cases can be brought to the attention of social services departments earlier and more consistently than otherwise. This awareness is equally important for hospital staff, particularly in accident and emergency departments."

Much more needs to be done. Training in the prevention and treatment of child abuse is of the essence. I am talking about paediatricians, and particularly about those who are attached to casualty departments. In many areas of Great Britain training in the detection of, as they are called, NAIs — non-accidental injuries — might benefit from improvements being made. I have been told by paediatricians in Scotland and London that the detection of non-accidental injuries can be very difficult. Consequently, teachers should be trained in detecting possible cases of child abuse. Such abuse may come to light, in various ways, in the classroom or playground. Training could also be given to health visitors, police officers and, just as importantly, to social workers. Members of the abuser's family also have a duty to protect those children from being subjected to such brutality. Equally, those who inflict physical, sexual or psychological harm on children should be encouraged to seek help from statutory agencies and voluntary associations.

I commend the marvellous work done by the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. It does valuable work in seeking to care both for the abused child and his parents or "caretakers". The system of children's hearings in Scotland has also played an important part in dealing with this social evil. But that evil is not altogether absent south of the border. More resources must be put into training social workers and others directly and professionally involved with those children who are in danger of suffering sexual or physical abuse. If the system of children's hearings or children's panels is unacceptable south of the border, perhaps family courts should be set up.

I turn now to the prevention of that horrendously violent crime—rape. It is essential that the victims of rape and other sexual assaults should be treated as humanely and sympathetically as possible. That sympathetic and sensitive treatment must begin from the moment that the victim or complainant is first interviewed by police officers and must continue until she gives evidence in court. I am grateful to the Home Secretary for acknowledging the need to make the criminal investigation of rape more sensitive to the victim's needs. In the interest of justice, the interests of the accused must also be protected, but that protection should not include anonymity during court proceedings.

I accept that there are immense difficulties about reconciling the need to protect the complainant with the need to protect the interests of the accused. Indeed, that is particularly true when the issue of consent is in dispute. But the criminal investigation of rape must be exhaustively and diligently pursued bearing in mind that the victim will suffer from shock even if she has not been subjected to excessive physical violence. It is not always the case that rape is accompanied by severe physical violence. I believe that the New York police department recently issued a circular which sought to give advice to those women trapped in such appalling circumstances. Part of that advice was not to offer physical resistance.

For my part — no doubt the Minister and his ministerial colleagues will reject this—I would like to see the complainer provided with legal assistance and representation from the moment a complaint is brought to the attention of the police force. I believe that is the case in Denmark where the victim is given that representation right up to, and including, the court proceedings. I would like to see a ban or severe restriction on defence lawyers trawling through complainers' sexual history or experiences. Far too many judges, on both sides of the border, are only too willing to allow this type of fishing operation.

Rape is a vastly under-recorded and under-reported crime. If the victim of sexual assault had confidence in the criminal investigation of this crime, more cases would be reported to the police. The Home Secretary acknowledged that. I wholeheartedly agree with the right hon. Gentleman that those who are found guilty of this crime should receive a condign punishment. A rapist must receive a severe sentence for his crime. The rapist certainly deserves no pity, except perhaps when he is suffering from a mental illness or when a case can be made for diminished responsibility. Too often, English judges impose sentences upon convicted rapists that are foolishly light and inadequate.

I chose to speak about three forms of criminal activity which could be diminished by the application of resources such as for the criminal investigation of rape and sexual assault. There is no doubt that some welcome developments have occurred in Scotland and England. The police force at Strathclyde now have a unit under the control of Chief Inspector Hood which deals with victims of sexual assault in a most compassionate, sensitive and intelligent way. That is a development which is emerging in towns and cities in England.

British people, whatever their political persuasions, seek to live in a peaceful, law-abiding community. The House must acknowledge that.

8.53 pm

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): We appear to exist in the post-permissive era when certain Victorian values are once again appreciated. But the legacy of that era means that for many, a far greater element of permissiveness is now a part of the fabric of modern society. Running parallel to that development has been the growing tendency to divorce political action from the rule of law and to substitute violence for debate. It is a matter of deep regret that such an approach has yet to be reversed. Even when that reversal occurs, once again, one fears that an element will have been absorbed into contemporary life style.

For the prevention of crime to be successful it is necessary effectively to counter the decline of traditional standards by enthusiastically advocating the importance of law and order as well as positively portraying the benefits of moral behaviour together with respect for our fellow beings and for authority. In that way both the over-emphasis on permissive behaviour together with the doctrine of revolutionary tendency rather than persuasive argument may be rebuffed.

However, while the winning of the arguments in the long term is essential, short-term measures to help to gain success over crime perpetrated under the guises of permissiveness or political action are urgently necessary. There must be a greater partnership between the protectors and the protected. People cannot leave everything to the police and the politicians.

The prevention of crime can range from the elementary to the more exotic. Every householder should have a chain on the front door, every parent should have full knowledge of where their children are playing. Might we not combine such basic essentials with more dramatic ideas?

The stocks were used to shame the villain — humiliation can be a most potent weapon. There should be a form of public disgrace for child abusers, rapists and the like, as well as the full rigours of the law. The instant correction of the transgressor by the transgressed was accepted by all—why not a clip around the ear rather than the full rigour of the law?

Perhaps the ultimate areas of unbridled permissiveness and unwarranted political action lie in drugs and terrorism. Both these crimes show an alarming growth and a frightening ability to undermine stability. Neither can be left solely to the local community. International co-operation is essential for the successful prevention of these crimes.

In the matter of drugs, the Council of Europe has been at the forefront of moves to ensure such international co-operation. The Pompidou group, which is chaired by the United Kingdom, conducts studies into the problems of drug abuse and trafficking within Europe. Such initiatives are to be applauded, are to be supported, and are to be followed through urgently.

With regard to terrorism, a new initiative for international co-operation has been put forward by the Western European Union for a European group to co-ordinate the fight against terrorism under the initials GECLAT. The blindness of the choice of targets masks the optical accuracy in the aims of the terrorist. It is fervently to be hoped that the Government will play a leading role in the fight-back via this proposal. The group, involving the seven member countries, would centralise all information obtained by relevant security services so that threats can be ascertained and assessed. The group would plan, prepare and co-ordinate measures so that frontiers provided no barriers. The group would create an operational unit for rapid intervention against any terrorist threat wherever it might arise.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor reminded us recently in a Carlton Club lecture of the words of Edmund Burke on liberty:

> "The only liberty I mean, is a liberty connected with order: that not only exists along with order and virtue, but which cannot exist at all without them."

The Government have continually shown their commitment to freedom and the law. They have recognised the need to accept and proclaim the responsibilities that are an essential accompaniment. The successful prevention of crime safeguards those beliefs and it is surely common sense to all but the inherently wicked.

8.59 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I regret that I have come into the debate rather late, but the House will appreciate that the local government elections are on and that some of us were forced to be away for the early part of the debate. I also regret that a debate of this importance is taking place when the House is almost empty because I am sure that the subject would command the attention of many hon. Members if the debate were on a different day. I nevertheless welcome the opportunity to speak.

Like other hon. Members, I believe that unemployment is a factor which makes crime prevention more difficult. I say that in full knowledge of the fact that we had high unemployment in the 1930s. There is a difference between the effect of unemployment on crime in the 1930s and its effect today. Today's unemployment is accompanied by affluence for some people. There is a stark contrast between the unemployed who feel alienated and lose self-respect and the affluence that tends to surround them.

It is much more difficult to tell people who feel that they have no part to play in society that they should be law-abiding—of course we tell them that—when there is such affluence. We should try to understand the pressures on unemployed young people in a world of video recorders and advertisements which encourage them to have expensive consumer goods. Their unemployment and poverty in the midst of affluence produces a conflict which we should try to understand before dismissing them by saying that they should know better.

A few weeks ago, I saw a television programme about the City of London. Television programmes often repeat what we already know, but some of the information which emerges in that programme about incomes in the City and what people will earn when the big bang comes left me astonished. People are earning £30,000 or £40,000 within their first few years of work and £100,000 seems almost to be the norm. Some people are earning £1 million a year. Such affluence when 4 million people are unemployed and some school leavers have never had a chance of a job is a contrast that I find hard to accept, and it must be even harder for young people to accept it.

Fear of crime makes many people feel insecure, but we have still tended not to worry about removing people from certain areas. For example, we have taken caretakers away from council estates and we have denuded underground stations of staff. If we leave large areas unpopulated and if there are no bobbies on the beat, we are leaving space where people of criminal intent can have their way. It is

all too easy to say that we have saved money by having television monitors instead of caretakers or Underground staff and that we must be careful about how many police officers we have, but the result will be open and vulnerable areas, and villains will tend to exploit them. That is why most of our constituents say that they want more home beat police officers. Home beat officers represent the familiar forces of law and order.

The Minister might well say that more bobbies have been put on the beat. We have pressed for that, but the cover is still pretty thin. Only a few weeks ago, I talked to a local chief superintendent and we discussed how many officers he would need to provide cover for most of the day and the early evening. He said that he would need 20 or 30 more officers. That is for just one police station in Battersea.

It would be helpful if the Home Office increased the number of bobbies on the beat in a few selected areas as an experiment. They should then monitor the feeling of local people and the crime rate to see whether the increase has the desired effect. If we can reduce the level of crime by putting more bobbies on the beat, it might prove to be one of the most cost-effective things we could do in that difficult area.

Racial attacks have been discussed in a number of debates and at Question Time. Nevertheless, it is my sad feeling that there are still too many people from the black and Asian communities who feel excessively vulnerable. All too often there are, sadly, reports of attacks in various parts of London and possibly other parts of the country where people are being attacked, threatened or made to feel vulnerable because of the colour of their skin. I appreciate that the Metropolitan police commissioner has given this matter high priority. Nevertheless, the attacks continue and we must look further at this difficult aspect.

One area of local authority provision which is particularly telling and does not get mentioned enough in debates is intermediate treatment provided by local authority social services departments. On occasion, I have met people working in intermediate treatment in my local authority area of Wandsworth. I cannot help believing that a sensitive and highly professional approach to young people who are liable to become criminals or who have taken the first step or two down that path is still an important preventive service.

I am concerned that the pressure on local authorities to save money all the time is, in a sense, making them reluctant to put the necessary effort, money and resources into a professional type of intermediate treatment. I should like the Home Office to look at that again. There is a difficulty and local authorities are under pressure. However, preventive work with young people must surely be one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing crime. I should like the Home Office to liaise more closely with other Departments to see whether local authorities can be encouraged to develop their intermediate treatment. Some local authorities do it very professionally, as does Wandsworth, but others are less professional. I want good practice to become the norm.

Admittedly, the previous Home Secretary said that he wanted to see more development of reparation. Since then there has been silence. Perhaps things are happening and the Minister may mention that in his reply. I cannot help feeling that one of the most important paths down which we should go would be to build far more into our criminal justice system the idea of reparation. Of course, for certain crimes reparation would not be appropriate and confronting the victim with the criminal would be much too difficult and sensitive. However, interestingly, that has been done in parts of the United States.

It would be effective if criminals could be shown what they had done to the victim, if it is an individual, or to society, if they are charged with vandalism or criminal damage. If there could be a closer relationship between the people who cause criminal damage or distress and reparation, with it featuring more prominently in the punishment inflicted by the courts, I believe that criminals would feel a greater sense of the damage they cause when they commit criminal offences.

I should like a more sweeping approach to be adopted in our criminal justice system to try to encourage the courts to build in reparation. More schemes would have to be available as part of our criminal justice system, but I believe that it would be a productive and rewarding task and would have a better effect upon criminals. It would be more likely to prevent them reoffending than some of the punishments now inflicted. Of course, we have community service orders, but I would like to see more measures of that type and a greater attempt by the courts to link the punishment to a method of reparation so that the criminal is aware of what he or she has done.

I turn briefly to the subject of the design and maintenance of council estates. Having spent much time canvassing and walking up and down stairways, I am more aware of that today than a few weeks ago. I honestly believe that the design of some of our council housing encourages criminal activity. Above all, local authorities are slow to respond when graffiti is painted on the walls and common parts of flats and when there is vandalism and damage to property.

Even the problem of graffiti should be dealt with quickly, because if it seems that no one cares, the areas affected become alien territory. Instead of such areas becoming parts of people's homes, they are regarded as hostile and are attacked. I do not condone that because it should not happen, but unfortunately it does. If local authorities cared more about maintenance and getting rid of graffiti, that would inculcate, especially in young people, a feeling that someone cares, that these things matter, and that places such as corridors and stairways are akin to the homes in which people live. Such an approach would, I believe, discourage the attitude among some young people that leads them from the path of vandalism to the path of crime.

In my own area, asbestos was discovered on the Livingstone estate which had to be cleared for safety reasons. In no way do I blame the local authority for doing that. However, the council sold that estate to a developer, and the Secretary of State for the Environment attended the opening ceremony only a few days ago. On that private house council estate are now all sorts of features such as a jacuzzi simply to make the private purchasers feel that this new private estate matters.

I am not suggesting that there should be jacuzzis on council estates, but we should encourage local authorities to make council tenants feel that their environment matters. By doing so, the people themselves will show more respect and will care for their own environment.

We must develop the idea that local people can be in the lead in the battle against crime by suggesting methods of crime prevention. The National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders has done useful work in its

[Mr. Alfred Dubs]

priority estates and under its safe neighbourhood scheme. We should build on that and encourage more local authorities to go down that path, even if NACRO does not have the resources to help every local authority that wishes to do so.

Local people, through their tenants' associations, should be asked what would make them feel safer in the areas in which they live. We must involve local people. But it is no good simply asking them such questions. There must be a willingness to respond to what they say on the part of the police, the local authority, schools and all the services in the area.

I should like the work done by NACRO to be extended to many other parts of the country. We must tell local people, "You know how crime affects you. Your advice and views are important. We shall listen to your ideas, be they requests for more entryphones, better lighting, different design or more caretakers, because your lives and environment are important." If we are serious about crime prevention, that is something that we should do.

There are many useful ideas that could be developed. I have mentioned a few, and other hon. Members have mentioned others. If we are serious about helping people to prevent crime, which is the surest and best way of reducing the frightening crime wave, we must listen to what people say and act accordingly.

9.14 pm

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham): This has been a fascinating and interesting debate. The opening speeches took an hour, Wapping took another hour, Northeye took half an hour, and in the dying moments of the debate we are now getting down to the real issue of crime prevention. I hope that I will have an opportunity in the 10 minutes left to me to make one or two points that will not only encourage the Minister but pay tribute to the Government for the excellent work that they are trying to do in increasing the facilities and opportunities for crime prevention schemes.

Most hon. Members have their postbags filled these days with the horror and misery that their constituents feel about local crime. Just before I came into the Chamber —and I have listened to the whole debate from the very beginning, unlike some—I was reading a letter from constituents, who live on one of our housing association estates. They say that crime is now out of control—and this is in Cheltenham. Items are stolen from the car; gardens are uprooted; nothing is sacred. They say that they live in fear for their three daughters, restricting them to the vicinity of the house. They say that their freedom has gone. They go on to suggest a number of remedies with which I do not agree, but add that they feel that the law should prevent families like theirs thinking that they should take it into their own hands to defend their property and their homes because nobody else seems able to do anything about it.

The former Home Secretary made a significant contribution to crime prevention by setting up the crime prevention unit and supporting crime prevention projects. The Prime Minister's initiative last January, involving motor manufacturers and insurance companies in crime prevention, was another significant step forward. While I welcome these inititatives, I also note that, although we spend £5 billion-plus on apprehending and convicting criminals, only a minute proportion of the budget is spent on crime prevention or on the victim support schemes, which I helped to found. Last year the crime prevention budget was about £25 million.

The victim support schemes have done very much better, and I want, on their behalf, to pay a tribute to the Minister for being sympathetic to them. They have received a considerably enhanced budget and were this year given £136,000 to foster further local schemes. When this expenditure is monitored, I hope that care will be taken to ensure that it goes on local schemes. I am particulary concerned about the application made by Stroud, when no help was forthcoming. We have to see that the funds that are made available go in the right direction.

It is my contention that crime will be prevented only when a significant proportion of the law and order budget is devoted specifically to prevention. One of the most distressing factors about patterns of crime is that the poorest and most disadvantaged communities are also the most vulnerable to criminal activity. The Home Office survey in 1984 showed that the poorest estates have burglary rates five times higher than the national average and that there were similar variations for other offences, including criminal damage, car thefts and thefts from the person.

Against this depressing background, one of the most positive and encouraging developments of the past few years has been the increasing emphasis on effective crime prevention. I have some experience of it. The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) was good enough to pay tribute to the National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders, of which I was a founder member and of which I have been vice-chairman for many years. I know that the team of splendid people who are supporting NACRO are working very hard on this and, while they care for the offender and his family and the effect that life has on them, they are equally concerned about the victims and are heavily involved in crime prevention schemes.

NACRO's first neighbourhood crime prevention initiative began in Cheshire in 1976. Since then the number of prevention schemes undertaken by NACRO has mushroomed and we have helped to set up projects in over 40 local authorities. Improvements resulting from such schemes have included the introduction of entryphones to reduce opportunities for intruders to burgle or vandalise flats, the installation of new doors, window frames and locks which are more effective in preventing forced entry, improved lighting in streets and communal areas of estates to reduce opportunities for attacks in the dark, the introduction of resident caretakers, the setting up of youth clubs and other activities for those in the crime-prone teenage group, measures to speed up reletting of property to reduce opportunities for vandalism to empty property, the deployment of home-beat police officers and a range of physical improvements to residents' dwellings and to the estates generally.

In areas where the results have been monitored for some time they have been extremely encouraging. As a result of NACRO's first initiative in Cheshire, whereas one third of the residents reported experience of vandalism to their houses in 1976, when the project began, by 1979 the figure had fallen to one in eight. In 1976, 17 per cent. of the residents reported having had a burglary in the previous year but by 1979 the figure had fallen to 8 per cent. and

the fall is continuing. Therefore, I impress upon the Minister the immense value of encouraging and investing in such schemes.

More recent monitoring has also been heartening. For example, the work of NACRO's safe neighbourhoods unit recently led to substantial reductions in crime in an estate in Lewisham following a series of improvements. Comparing the nine-month period up to June 1985 with the same period in 1984, we find that burglaries dropped by 54 per cent., thefts of and from cars by 60 per cent. and street crime by 48 per cent.

I mention those things to illustrate what can be done when there is a strong will, commitment and co-operation and when a team of voluntary people are ready to give of their best and spend their time in the best interests of the community. However, I fear that such initiatives may die unless they are supported by a well funded, well co-ordinated national strategy.

The Stonham housing association, of which I am chairman, provides about 3,000 bed spaces for a variety of people in need. Each year 90,000 ex-offenders are returned to society; a high proportion—roughly 44 per cent. — are homeless. While there is no direct connection between homelessness and crime, about 60 per cent. of homeless ex-offenders are reconvicted within two years. The proportion is higher if those suffering from mental illness are included, which should not happen.

Currently there are only 4,500 bed spaces. The Home Office has refused to fund any new schemes or to extend existing schemes. A few months ago a NACRO deputation had the opportunity of meeting Ministers, with their colleagues in the Department, to discuss the matter. I urge the Minister not to allow this to continue for another year while yet another examination of occupancy capacity takes place. The record of NACRO can be justified and proved.

The Home Office—it is really the taxpayer we are talking about—gets an extremely good financial deal from Stonham. A Stonham bed costs £3,000 a year; a local prison space costs £11,000 per year. Additionally, Stonham achieves 90-plus per cent. rehabilitation success and there is 75 per cent. bed occupancy. If all the hotels that I have had an interest in during my career could be 75 per cent. occupied all the time, I would not be in this House living on a pittance. I should be outside enjoying myself in other ways.

Crime prevention is too serious a matter to be tagged on to the tail end of various departmental budgets. If the Home Office values the schemes run by various groups, it should reverse its short-sighted attitude and support them with manpower and funds.

9.24 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful for this brief chance to speak in the debate, and I am pleased to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) because it gives me an opportunity to pay tribute to the excellent work of NACRO in Norwich and Norfolk. I am delighted to add to what my hon. Friend said about its work.

During the debate it has been repeatedly stated that there is anxiety about the "rising tide" of crime, to use the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), which has gone on under successive Governments. My constituents are worried about the level of crime which is why I am happy to participate, if only briefly, in the debate.

Only this evening I had a telephone message from a constituent living in the city of Norwich who is having to call a meeting because of the anxiety about vandalism by young people, and related problems. We must deal with that day in and day out, which is why the debate is so relevant and important. I support hon. Members who have said that it is a pity that the debate had to be held today.

I would put crime prevention under three headings, and, obviously, I shall have time to speak about only one. The first heading is the role of the Government and the Legislature. I support what the Government have done, are doing, and seek to do on crime prevention, and tonight we should pay tribute to their work. The second heading is the work of the police, and the third, in which I take particular interest, is education and parents.

It has already been said that the peak of criminal activity occurs among young people aged about 15. It would be relevant for me to talk at length about education and its connection with crime if time permitted, but I shall make a few comments about police work in Norfolk, and how I see the problems there regarding crime prevention.

Earlier today I had a look at the 1984 report from the chief constable of Norfolk who described crime prevention as a primary objective of the police force in Norfolk. That is equally true today. I pay tribute to the work that is being done in Norwich and Norfolk, through crime prevention panels, home watch and good neighbour schemes. That excellent work is continuing with Government support.

There is some debate in Norfolk and, no doubt, elsewhere about the extent to which the police are overstretched. Early in this Parliament I received a letter from the chief constable of Norfolk which was sent to all local Members of Parliament, expressing anxiety about certain aspects of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and the increased workload and paper work which it might inflict on the police force. I was reminded of that only this week when I saw in the *Daily Telegraph* the singularly appropriate headline:

"Policemen fold under pressure of paper work."

I hope that the Home Office and my hon. Friend the Minister will look seriously at the burden that they may be placing unwittingly on the police force when they give it additional administrative tasks. We all want the police out on the beat, doing the various tasks which will help to prevent crime. If time allowed, I could develop that theme at great length, but I think I have made the point.

As the debate is concerned with crime prevention, I should like to say how disturbing it was for me, at a time when the police are under attack from revolutionary and unpleasant elements in society, to hear the unbalanced attack on the police from those using the debate as an opportunity to talk about the events at Wapping. Of course, it is right to criticise the police constructively, and we all welcome that. But it saddened me to hear the way in which it was done. There must surely be a more responsible way of going about this. I know that the Government are addressing themselves to the whole question of crime prevention with great seriousness, and I support what what they are doing. I am happy, therefore, to support that work, and to pay tribute to the work of the police in Norwich and Norfolk.

Mr. Soley *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Soley: My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) is not here today. He is working in a number of by-elections and local elections, which will come as no surprise. A comment was made by the Home Secretary questioning his not being here. The Home Secretary is not here tonight, and I understand why. However, I hope that there was no implication by the Home Secretary in regard to my right hon. Friend, whose absence is understandable. If we are going to go into that area, of course, we would want to look at the presence of the Home Secretary on the Public Order Bill, but I hope that that was not implied.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): No.

Mr. Soley: If it was not implied, I accept that and withdraw the remarks; if it was, my remarks stand.

We have spent some time on Wapping, and I have no intention of going over the ground again. I wish to make a couple of points. Although it is sad that it had to take up so much time of the debate on crime prevention, it was vital and necessary that views were taken and expressed on this issue, not only because of the question of policing and its link with crime prevention, but because what happened on Saturday night is deeply disturbing to everybody, including the police.

What needs to be understood by this Government more than anything else is that, if they continue with social and economic policies that rip apart the fabric of society, those public order disturbances will get more severe, and they cannot at the end of the day ask or expect the police to be used to contain those troubles.

The House needs to remember what we are doing is allowing one man—a multi-millionaire who is not a British citizen and who controls one third of the British press—to be directly responsible for creating mayhem in our streets, which results in police officers and members of the public getting injured. We need to address the political implications of that.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) also needs to remember the limitations of the video to which he referred. It is the same one that I saw. What the video cannot and does not show, for reasons that I think he will understand, is what was happening in the so-called park out of range of the camera. The senior officers at Leman street station were saying to me at the time, "We know that there is something still happening there, and we don't know what". That is trouble in a sense.

I would say to the Minister that, if he does not want further trouble on Saturday nights at Wapping, the Government need to have a long hard look at the lessons to be learnt from last Saturday and at police tactics. That is one of the matters I shall be meeting the Minister or the Home Secretary to discuss in the near future.

I want to say to the hon. Members for Bury St. Edmunds and for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) that I find their remarks and comments in the debate to be quite pathetic, frankly. There was a selective use of quotations —this attempt to read homilies to the Labour party or to other people and to imply thereby that something is wrong with questioning or raising discussion about the democratic accountability of the police. The police also want to be democratically accountable. The real shame of Conservative Members is that they do not have any faith in democracy. That was shown clearly when the hon. Member for Westminster, North said dismissively, when giving one of his selective quotes about democracy, "whatever that may mean". If the hon. Gentleman has no idea what democracy means, he should not be in this place, because this place is all about democracy. If the hon. Gentleman does not have the courage, commitment and vision to commit himself to the democracy that we practise here and outside, he certainly should not seek to lecture anyone—police, public demonstrators or anyone else—on the importance of democracy.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Soley: I was addressing my remarks to the hon. Member for Westminster, North. I would give way to the hon. Member for Westminster, North, but he does not want to intervene. I do not want to use up the time available for the Minister to reply.

The statistics demonstrate all too clearly how badly the Government have failed. Their own statistics show that crime rose by 37 per cent. from 1978 to 1984. Violence has risen by 31 per cent., burglary by 59 per cent. and criminal damage by 63 per cent. It is an appalling, abysmal record. The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) is an honourable exception to Conservative Members. He has an honourable record in this debate, in his work with the all-party group, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and Victim Support. I take my hat off to much of what he has said and done. But unless he can persuade his Government to put their money where their mouth is, he will not achieve the things that he seeks.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds implied that in some way one-parent families were linked with high crime rates. They are not.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I said no such thing.

Mr. Soley: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the record tomorrow, he will find that a clear link is implied between one parent families and crime. The evidence does not prove that.

Indeed, if one is looking at personal and family behaviour, one needs to look at love and consistency in parenthood. That love and consistency can be as good in a one-parent family as in a two-parent family. There is no evidence of a link between crime and broken families. However, there is evidence of a link between crime, depression and other things and unhappy families. It is the lack of love, consistency and so on that creates the problem.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds should know better than to say that blacks were charging the police like Zulus. That is appalling, and he should withdraw those words. They will be utterly misunderstood outside the House. I know what the hon. Gentleman's views are about racism. He has expressed them clearly in the past and has come out strongly against racist organisations. I respect them. But his remark about the blacks charging the police like Zulus is utterly wrong and should be withdrawn.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: If I had said anything that resembled what the hon. Gentleman is alleging, of course I would withdraw it. Let me repeat the point that I was making. If local leaders go round suggesting to black

youngsters that the police are racists and oppressors, we cannot be surprised if those youngsters react by charging the police in the manner that they did.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman's words were that blacks were prepared "to launch themselves, like Zulus". I say again that the hon. Gentleman should withdraw that phrase unreservedly. It is a disgraceful comment. It has all the usual implications of blind, unperceived — I emphasise that—racism.

People are not more violent than they used to be. In Britain, we are suffering from a breakdown in community ties. We have a Government who have speeded up that process. It is interesting that the public know what the policing priorities should be. Not just the excellent work by Islington and Merseyside on their crime surveys, but many other studies, including the Home Office study, show that the public, regardless of which group we are talking about, including the ethnic minorities, regard burglary, robbery, attacks on women, racial attacks and drunken driving as the main priorities for the police. We seek to introduce a system to ensure that those things are given the priority that people want, as shown by those studies and surveys.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) rightly brought alcohol and drugs into the debate. We have spent too little time on that. I speak as the ex-chairman of the Alcohol Education Centre. It is absolutely right to say that the link between alcohol and crime is strong.

At the end of the day, we shall not combat the wave of crime that we have experienced under the Government unless we have more sensible, intelligent and sensitive policies which, above all, put people back into public places and attempt to clear up the problem of graffiti, vandalism and run-down areas that the Government have so desperately aggravated.

9.40 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): The debate, which was started modestly and quietly but in a determined way by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, had a major intermission when the Wapping matter was discussed. We then returned to the topic on the Order Paper — crime prevention. I believe that it would be courteous and correct to make some observations about Wapping, particularly in view of the delegation which the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) brought to see me this morning. Hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), gave various accounts of what happened at Wapping last Saturday night.

There were two marches on Saturday. One march, with about 3,500 people, came from the Temple, I believe, and a march of about 2,000 people came from Butchers row. There was a confluence of the two somewhere near Virginia street, in the midst of the demonstration. I point out to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield and the hon. Member for Newham, North-East that, as I understand it, the march from Butchers row had not been notified in the sense of the organisers having had a discussion with the police. Therefore, the police responded to the march without the due planning which I trust is a normal feature of such marches.

The two marches met somewhere near Virginia street. Part of the Butchers row group split up and worked its way back towards Wellclose square. That group of about 1,000 played a significant role in the ensuing difficulties. It is possible that those people were not connected with the print unions which, on the whole, have conducted themselves with a fair amount of care.

Immediately the two marches met, there were significant disorders. There were missiles, smoke bombs and thunder flashes. It was necessary for the police to restore order. The mounted branch and riot shields were used also.

Significant public disorders took place. The police have a duty to seek to restore order. I do not wish to go any further into the details. I merely wish to lay before the House the fact that there was a significant problem with which the police had to grapple.

Mr. Leighton: An incident occurred and was dealt with by what I would have thought was an over-reaction. For the next two or three hours there were repeated baton charges and the use of the riot squad. That was completely unnecessary.

Mr. Shaw: Later, I shall make a suggestion to the hon. Gentleman, as I did this morning. What I want to convey to the House now is that words have been put on the record. There is another record, a portion of which is in my mind, and I feel I should describe it.

There were major disorders, including the use of missiles, petrol bombs and thunder flashes. As the hon. Gentleman knows, scaffolding brackets, and so on were used also. Under those conditions, measures had to be taken to protect the police officers. Of the 1,774 police who were on duty at the scene, a small number were on horseback and a number used riot shields. The vast majority were standard, uniformed officers.

To prevent such problems occurring, it is necessary to have a resumption of a proper organising relationship between those who seek to continue the demonstration and dispute at Wapping and the police. Therefore, I was glad when the hon. Member for Newham, North-East brought his delegation this morning. The trade union leaders agreed to my suggestion that there should be a meeting with the deputy assistant commissioner, Mr. Wyn Jones. I understand that he will be available to see them tomorrow. I hope that the meeting takes place. An understanding of limits, number difficulties and a rational arrangement to allow peaceful demonstrations to continue is linked to the crime prevention element of this matter. As the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) will know from our discussions on the Public Order Bill, the peaceful type of demonstrations should not cause any difficulty. The difficulty occurs when the demonstrations deteriorate into violence.

Mr. Benn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shaw: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I have now spent considerable time on that matter. It would be right now for me to sum up the debate on crime prevention.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith was not unfair about the position we outlined although, in a rather mean sense, he suggested that we were not tackling the matter correctly and that it was all due to the Government's economic policies. I hope that he will recognise that we have made some significant advances in manning the police force, providing resources to the police services and

[Mr. Shaw]

increasing the number of crimes detected. The hon. Gentleman always complains about the percentage but he will find that the crime growth rate has continued to increase in times of high unemployment and high employment. There cannot be any simplistic connection between unemployment and crime levels. It is not fair either to say that certain disadvantaged groups are automatically more prone to criminal activities than others, and I know that the hon. Gentleman would not wish to say that.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith was absolutely right to say that there is a big opportunity for change with respect to residential caretakers on housing estates. I am glad to say that, under the Swansea crime prevention scheme, the local authority has put in caretakers. It is interesting that the cost of the caretakers was shared among the tenants at an increase of about 40p a week in their rent. They now have a man back on the premises instead of the automatic security arrangements which applied before. They do not have graffiti and damage. This has created much greater contentment. I hope that the Swansea crime prevention experiment will provide useful information and assistance for other local authorities to help with similar schemes.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) said that crime prevention was something in which local people could lead — how right he was. The basis of crime prevention and the type of techniques available is that they should be tailored to community situations. Local authorities have an important role to play. I accept that the crime prevention panels, which at present do not automatically include local authority representation, could probably with advantage do so. I shall be meeting the crime prevention panels and I should like to make that suggestion and ascertain whether we can achieve that broader base for contact in the community. The hon. Member for Battersea rightly said that it was a matter of tailoring crime prevention to the community's policing arrangements and of seeking to reduce fear as well as the level of crime by introducing various techniques suitable to the particular location.

I discovered, when I saw the Wellingborough crime prevention special project, that the local authority was fully involved in the arrangements. Wellingborough, which has a proud record, is a town of 39,000 people with a great amount of motorised shopping. There is, therefore, a big problem with the centre car park, for which no charges are levied. Consequently, no one is on duty, and autocrime in Wellingborough is at a high level. There could be a connection between the two. A scheme was devised to ascertain whether the cost of putting a person in to look after the car park would be more than offset by the reduction in autocrime. That is what crime prevention is all about.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) made an incredibly profound contribution to our debate. I very much respected his speech but it was misunderstood by the hon. Member for Hammersmith. My hon. Friend provided a measured response to the problem of crime prevention as shown by crime statistics in different age groups. My hon. Friend rightly said that there had been a fall in the number of burglaries—nationally, a modest decrease of 2 per cent. but domestically, a decrease of 4 per cent. That is an encouraging and useful start.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) made his customary trenchant contribution. He was right to raise the question of the role of consent in the divided community. He illustrated that point vividly by referring to Northern Ireland. However, he knows that when the Ulster constabulary protects a march in Derry, that kind of march is of a very different quality from, say, a march in Downpatrick. The same police service has to seek to protect the community, whatever the divisions within it may be.

If there is an overriding rule in the handling by the police of public disorder it is that the rule of law is paramount and that the law must be maintained so that citizens may go about their lawful business. The public disorders at Wapping have been mentioned. The traditional right of people to demonstrate peacefully is long established and well recognised, but responsibility must accompany a right of that character. We must ensure that the community at large does not suffer as a consequence of such demonstrations.

The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) referred to the fear of crime and to the importance of the better design of council estates. With that in mind, a greater number of police forces are now offering architect liaison officers to councils throughout the country. They will provide a useful service. The hon. Gentleman referred to crime prevention panels. The Government are open to suggestions. I invite the hon. Gentleman and all other right hon. and hon. Members to take an interest in crime prevention and to bring forward suggestions from their constituents, local authorities or crime prevention panels. We want to encourage the sharing of good practice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) referred to the successful use of neighbourhood watch schemes in his constituency. He attacked the permissiveness in our society. Although it is difficult to determine according to statistics, the scale of this problem has given rise to a reduction in self-discipline and general moral standards, which leads progressively towards criminality. I trust that my hon. friend will make use of any evidence that he has in his report to Sir James Hennessy's inquiry into the problems at Northeye prison. I noted his trenchant observation about management within the prison service. I shall pass it on to my noble Friend the Minister who has responsibility for these matters.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) referred to the application that was made for a substantial increase of 28 officers in the Hampshire constabulary. When the matter was last reviewed in 1984-85 an application was made for three sergeants. The Home Secretary took the view then that the scope for civilianisation was such that he would not approve that application. The current application will be given the most careful consideration in discussions with the relevant inspector of constabulary. I hope that we shall be able to reach a decision in the not too distant future.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) had the remarkable good fortune of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) being able to intervene from this Dispatch Box and answer the point that he raised. It was a remarkable

achievement and I was grateful for it. The hon. Gentleman referred to sensitive treatment for rape victims. How right he is. Police forces are beginning to use methods that encourage more people to come forward and give details of the terrible crime of rape from which they have suffered. Sensitive treatment, yes; confidentiality, yes; and careful arrangements, yes, to ensure that police officers, many of whom are women, are trained to handle this sensitive matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) was in good form. He wants more immediate punishment. He was right to say that crime prevention must include the hazard of international terrorism. That has led this Government to take major international initiatives to try to reduce it.

I have referred to some of the points made by the hon. Member for Battersea. I noted his remarks about racial attacks. I should not be too keen on pressure tests, involving the saturation of an area with large numbers of police. Nevertheless, I recognise that a certain amount of testing is needed. The crime prevention unit is undertaking an assessment of various scales of policing. This might help to shed some light on the problem that he raised. As for intermediate treatment, I understand that a research project is in hand, through our research planning unit. It has been placed with the University of Cambridge.

It was good to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham refer to the vital support that is given to victims by victim support schemes and how important it is to encourage the voluntary sector. We shall do our best to ensure that the voluntary sector receives its fair share of the resources. The voluntary sector does special work with vulnerable groups. It is absolutely right, knowing how easy it is for criminals to latch on to the most vulnerable sectors of society, that we should encourage the voluntary sector to do more.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) spoke about the importance of education and parents. There can be no better way of ensuring an improving standard of citizenship than to ensure that family life is improving. These two factors must be correlated and it is one of the tragedies of our time that pressures seem to have left so many families unable to sustain their primary duty to ensure that their children are brought up with a certain sense of their rights and responsibilities.

The burden of paperwork is a standard complaint whenever policemen gather or Members of Parliament come together. I accept the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North and I will take due note of it. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds is rather assiduous in castigating the Home Office if it becomes involved in creating too much paperwork for the police.

I would like to summarise my view of crime prevention. It is not a substitute for a law and order policy. Crime prevention is part of a law and order strategy. It cannot be used on its own but it can be made a creative way of ensuring that the fear of crime and the absolute levels of crime are contained. Crime is perhaps the major social disease of this and many other western countries. It is therefore correct that we should treat the disease in terms of vaccination, inoculation and preventive medicine. The Government's crime prevention policies can therefore fit within such a policy.

We must deal with law and order across the spectrum. On the question of resources, the Government have increased police expenditure from £1·1 billion to £2·8 billion and that level of resource may be increased. More police officers are essential before crime prevention can work. Since 1979, an additional 14,000 officers have been recruited and there is now a civilian strength in support of the police of some 35,000. That figure is important in an employment sense and it releases officers to carry out more effective work.

We must have the correct body of law and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Public Order Bill are two such measures which will provide an important context for modern policing which, I trust, will stand the test of time. Finally, there must be a full range of sentences available to the courts and a courts procedure which ensures that proper justice is dispensed and that there is a capacity to handle the range of criminality in the judicial system. We have achieved that by making many changes in sentencing and, we should not forget, in non-custodial sentencing.

With these factors, crime prevention can produce important advantages for our citizens. Some schemes are already working and more schemes are being tested and there is a greater public awareness and a willingness to help in crime prevention than in any other aspect of policing. Crime prevention brings the police and the community together and provides a real focus for local issues and problems and allows these problems to receive special treatment and acceptance.

Crime prevention can work only when the police service is in charge. It is not a substitute for some form of vigilante operation. Crime prevention must be properly organised and must be the result of proper training. Crime prevention officers are experts in this area and crime prevention must be police-led. The community and the citizen can at last have the opportunity to play a part to ensure that their homes—whether that is a flat in a city centre or a detached house on the outskirts of a town—and their way of life are better protected against the ravages created by the rise in crime. Clearly, there are limitations.

There has been a modest drop in the number of domestic burglaries but the real problem, which the hon. Member for Hammersmith touched on at the beginning of the debate, is the sheer vastness of opportunist crime against property. Indeed, 95 per cent. of all crime is committed against property, whether that property is a handbag in a car or the contents of a house. It is just not feasible to expect there to be a uniformed police officer on tap round the clock to deal with that sort of crime. We must do more together to battle our way through opportunist crime. Crime prevention is not just a necessary but a leading component in our strategy. Crime prevention techniques are peculiarly effective in dealing with opportunist crime——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Vietnamese Refugees (Hong Kong)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

10 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I am pleased to have this opportunity to raise the plight of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

Recently I visited the territory and had an opportunity, not for the first time, to visit refugee camps containing Vietnamese refugees. I visited the Chi Ma Wan camp for the second time, and the Bowring camp for the first time. They are both closed camps for Vietnamese refugees. I was deeply disappointed and depressed to find that refugees are still there after, perhaps, four years. Every hon. Member and everyone in Hong Kong would regard their conditions as being totally unacceptable. The residents of Hong Kong, and certainly the residents of the camps, believe the Vietnamese refugees to be a forgotten people.

I shall describe the conditions in those camps. There cannot be any real family life, because there is no privacy. The living space for a family in some of the camps is literally the bottom or top end of a bunk, and has been for a very long time. Those bunks stand next to one another in rows in sheds. The families have no privacy and live in totally unacceptable conditions.

Those conditions might have been acceptable if the refugees had had to live in them for only a short time. After all, the situation was, as I and my parliamentary colleagues saw, critical some years ago when boat loads of refugees were arriving. In those circumstances, it was understandable that such conditions should exist. But I raise this subject tonight because I believe that the solution to the problem is not to spend much more money on upgrading the camps and making them pleasanter to live in but to get rid of them completely. We should get those people out of Hong Kong and resettle them in other countries throughout the world.

The British Government have the key to opening that door so that many more people can be resettled. When the closed camp regime was first introduced in 1982, there were about 12,600 refugees in them. The number has now fallen to just over 9,000. Hong Kong has accepted about 14,500 refugees since 1975. It is instructive but rather depressing to look at the resettlement figures for the various countries.

At the Geneva conference we agreed that we should take some 10,000 refugees, which is 2,500 less than overcrowded Hong Kong has been prepared to take. In 1980 we took 6,076 refugees, in 1981 we took 1,775, in 1982 we took 241, in 1983 we took 101, and in 1984 we took 88. Last year, we took only 44 refugees from the 10,000 or so that are in Hong Kong.

By contrast the United States of America in 1982 took 6,657, in 1983 it took 2,065, in 1984 it took 1,540 and in 1985 it took 1,721. That represented 43·5 per cent. of the total number of resettled refugees.

In 1985 Canada took 1,302 refugees, which represented 32·9 per cent. of the total number of resettled refugees. Australia took 329 refugees, 8·3 per cent. of those resettled.

What a contrast it is that in 1985 we can take 44, but America took more than 1,700, Canada more than 1,300 and Australia 329. The Minister will tell us that the Government agencies have accepted a commitment to accept an extra 500 family reunions at a rate of 40 a month. That will represent 500 additional places in Britain. I press the Minister to keep that rate of 40 a month. I should like to see that number increased beyond 40 per month and beyond the 500 places. The Home Affairs Select Committee took evidence on this issue and recommended that the Government should accept 40 refugees per month.

If the Government are prepared to accept this modest commitment, it would unlock the door for America, Canada, Australia and other countries to take more refugees. I am sure that our agencies would be only too happy to agree to this. That has been made clear to the Government, and indeed to others who have investigated the matter.

Refugee Action undertook a major investigation of this issue. I shall not go into the details of its report which was published while I was in Hong Kong. I believe that Lord Chitnis, who led the delegation which compiled the report, proposes to raise the subject in another place shortly.

I press the Government to extend the commitment to take 40 refugees a month. I would prefer the Government to accept 50 refugees a month, but the Government's commitment would unlock the door to other refugees being resettled in America, Canada or Australia. Many of the refugees prefer to go to Canada or America. Obviously, the Vietnamese have had previous contact with the Americans. They have a knowledge of America and they often have friends and relations there. Therefore, their attention is drawn to that country and many of the refugees would, undoubtedly, like to settle there. There is a heavy responsibility on the Government to take more of the burden—a small part of the burden—to encourage other Governments to accept more refugees.

The people of Hong Kong and the British people would find the conditions in the camps unacceptable in a civilised community. The Government in Hong Kong are spending tremendous amounts of money and taking enormous trouble to sustain those camps. Obviously, some improvements could be made, but the most striking thing about the camps which I visited was the marvellous work done there by many people.

Voluntary agencies such as Save the Children Fund, the Salvation Army and volunteers, some of them young people from Britain, are doing a marvellous job helping with education, for example, in the refugee camps. More could be done, but the priority is not to improve conditions in the camps—although I would love that—but to get people out and settled. If the Minister visits the camps, he will find that the refugees want to know when they can be resettled. They do not say that they want conditions improved. It is understandable that they want to get out, bearing in mind how long some of them have been there.

When most of the refugees arrived and were put in the camps, they thought that they would be allowed to settle in Hong Kong or other countries fairly rapidly. Institutionalisation has sapped many people's will as they have been in the camps for a long time. There is no doubt that some of the more recent arrivals are not genuine refugees in that they are running away because they have been persecuted. They come because they want the benefit of the economic conditions that they read or hear about in Hong Kong and other Western countries. The Hong Kong Government introduced the closed camp regime to dissuade people from going to Hong Kong.

I remember that, when boats crowded with people were floating about the seas in that part of the world, some countries took a much less charitable view than Hong Kong. It might be possible to criticise some of what has happened in Hong Kong, but it has undoubtedly been generous to the refugees as compared with some other countries in the region. It has gone to an enormous amount of trouble and expense to accommodate and resettle them.

Will the Minister please give us a commitment to continue resettlement in Britain of the modest number of refugees that I mentioned? Most of those who go to the camps, like refugees throughout the world, are the people with get up and go. We have found that with various refugee communities, a notable recent example being the Asians. They have entrepreneurial flair, a desire for education and a tremendous contribution to make to the countries in which they are resettled. That is one reason why countries such as Australia and Canada are only too happy to accept many more refugees than we have accepted.

I know from my meetings with people in the camps and from studies on them that they are able and willing people who will contribute to the communities in which they settle. I urge the Minister to give us that commitment and to tell other Governments that Britain has been prepared to extend her commitment. I am sure that the response from Canada, Australia, and the United States will enable us to close the camps. We should then resolve the problem and end some of the misery.

10.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): I am sure that the whole House has listened with great care to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). His comments are based on first-hand knowledge as a result of his recent visit to Hong Kong, and I know that he has taken a considerable interest in this topic for many years. I welcome the opportunity to put the Government's views on the record.

The subject for debate which the hon. Gentleman has chosen concerns one of the sadder aspects of the conflicts that have troubled south-east Asia recently — the enormous exodus of refugees from Vietnam. I do not think that we have any reason to be ashamed of the part that we have played in efforts to solve the refugee problem with most of the burden falling on the authorities and people of Hong Kong.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the problem is still severe. Hong Kong still has more refugees than any other place of first asylum in the region. However, we are making steady progress towards a lasting solution. The total number of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong was over 50,000 in 1979. It dropped rapidly to under 13,000 by the end of 1981, largely as a result of Her Majesty's Government's initiative, and has since dropped gradually to 9,500 at the end of last year and just under 9,000 last month.

Since 1 January, 1,451 refugees have departed from Hong Kong for resettlement compared with 1,135 in 1985 and, one has to say that, some 525 have arrived against some 314 in 1985. The rise in departures is the result of increases in the numbers taken by the United Kingdom and other countries and I shall refer to those numbers in more detail later. As yet, there is no discernible reason for the increase in arrivals of some 40 per cent. or for the increasing proportion of northern Vietnamese in those arriving. Therefore, we have a problem of arrivals that we have yet to discover the reason for.

Hong Kong, as the hon. Gentleman mentioned, is the only place of first asylum to introduce a policy of local resettlement. It has now agreed to resettle up to another 250 ethnic Chinese refugees from the camps in Hong Kong. The refugees being resettled will be drawn from the longest stayers, that is those who have been in the camps for more than six years, and they will be among those who have proved hardest to resettle elsewhere. That is a significant contribution by the Hong Kong people and the Hong Kong Goverment.

Hong Kong is the only place of first asylum in the region to contribute towards the upkeep of its refugees. Last year 100 million Hong Kong dollars out of the 150 million Hong Kong dollars spent on refugees came directly from the Hong Kong Government. That is in stark contrast to Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia, which all insist that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees pays the total cost of the refugees.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that the Hong Kong Government have never turned any refugee away. All who wish to land are allowed to do so. Voluntary departures increased significantly last year, but in order for those voluntary departures to take place we know that refugees made their decision to depart freely and without any form of coercion. We cannot, of course, compel refugees to remain in Hong Kong if they no longer wish to do so.

I shall turn now to the United Kingdom's contribution. We have accepted some 12,500 refugees since 1975, all from Hong Kong. Last September—the hon. Gentleman was less than fair in his comments in this area—we announced relaxed criteria for family reunion under which some 420 refugees would be taken from Hong Kong. So far, 250 have been resettled under that programme. That meets our target of 40 per month since arrivals began in November.

I think that the hon. Gentleman would agree that our present priority must be the reunification of Vietnamese families which have members in Hong Kong and in this country. At this stage we are not able to enter into commitments to take further refugees from Hong Kong. Whether we might be able to do so in the future will be decided in the light of the willingness shown by other resettlement countries to respond to Hong Kong's need and of all the other circumstances at the time.

The hon. Gentleman referred to a possible change in the monthly intake, which is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary rather than for me. The principal determinant of the rate of resettlement in the United Kingdom is the availability of accommodation for refugees. The voluntary agencies are making great efforts in this regard, but the difficulties involved in accommodating 40 refugees monthly would obviously be far greater if the number was increased. There are difficulties in that area, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman would agree.

In line with the recommendations of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, we are pressing other resettlement countries to take additional refugees from Hong Kong to maximise the effect of our decision to resettle further numbers of

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

refugees. In other words, we try to multiply up, with help from other countries, the number that we are prepared to accept.

Mr. Wrigglesworth *rose——*

Mr. Eggar: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue for a moment, I shall of course give way.

As well as the main resettlement countries, we have approaached other countries that have taken Indo-Chinese refugees in the past. Ministers have raised the whole question of further resettlement with their opposite numbers in other countries, and we have made regular representations through our diplomatic missions.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees accords priority to the resettlement of refugees from Hong Kong, and has approached many Governments who seek his advice when allocating their refugee resettlement quotas. They have been very supportive in our efforts to help in the resettlement process.

So far, we have had a number of encouraging responses as a result of the initiative that we launched last September. Australia has agreed to accept for settlement a further 200 refugees, Canada 50, Finland 70, the Netherlands 80, New Zealand 10 and Sweden 100. The United States, which resettles more Indo-Chinese refugees than any other country, is currently accepting refugees at an annual rate of some 1,800—200 more than the previous year's ceiling. We are extremely grateful to all those countries for their efforts to help Hong Kong, and it is fair to claim that much of the credit for that additional resettlement is due to this Government's initiative that was taken in September. We have indications that a number of other countries are likely to respond favourably, and we are of course continuing the pressure.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I am pleased to hear what the Minister has just repc.ted, but does not he understand that waiting for the response of other Governments, before giving a commitment beyond the end of 1986, makes it much more difficult for other Governments to respond in the way that we would like? It is almost a circular problem. They are waiting to see what the British Government will do, and the British Government are waiting to see what they will do. Will not the Minster break the circle by making it clear that we will maintain that commitment after to the end of this year?

Mr. Eggar: We did exactly that in September. It was our initiative to take the extra resettlement cases, and our diplomatic initiative following that decision in the White Paper, that enabled us to persuade other countries to take more refugees than they would otherwise have done. I have already said that we are discussing the possibility of other countries taking further refugees. I do not think that at present it is quite appropriate for us to make any announcement about our future intentions. This is not only widely accepted by other countries but it is also understood by the UNHCR.

The presence of refugees in Hong Kong camps is one of the many sad aspects of the Indo-Chinese refugee problem. As the hon. Gentleman made clear, in an ideal world refugee camps, whether closed or open, would simply not exist. But neither I nor any other Minister could say that it was satisfactory or desirable to have 4,600 refugees in closed camps and slightly more than 4,000 in open camps. Refugee situations are never ideal, but having said that we must be realistic and accept, as did the hon. Gentleman, that the Hong Kong Government have done a great deal to make the life of the refugee as bearable as possible.

I know that many hon. Members find the whole idea of closed camps, of depriving innocent people of their liberty, repugnant. This Government dislike the policy. If, however, we were to end the policy now, the result would be that many more refugees would set out from Vietnam for Hong Kong, many in unseaworthy craft, with inevitable and tragic loss of life. Those who reached Hong Kong—because there would be some—would place an enormous burden on the resources of that already overcrowded territory. The result of ending our closed camp policy would be more human suffering in this tragic and troubled area of the world. The House will probably agree that in the circumstances the present policy is the only reasonable one to pursue.

Doubts have been expressed in some quarters about whether the closed camp policy has worked. Anyone who looks objectively at the statistics will see that as soon as the closed camp policy was introduced there was a considerable fall in numbers of arrivals in Hong Kong as compared with arrivals in other parts of the region.

Conditions in the camps have been the subject of much comment in press and Parliament. The Hong Kong Government and Her Majesty's Government attach great importance to ensuring that refugees are adequately cared for in the camps. I should like at this stage to quote remarks made by Mr. Paul Hartling, the last United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, when he visited Bowring closed camp, the camp that the hon. Gentleman also visited. He said that he did not like the idea of closed camps but that inside the Bowring camp he found "the circumstances, the conditions, very encouraging". He compared the situation of the children at the Bowring camp with that of some of the refugees in camps in other parts of south east Asia who, he said, were starving, sick, destitute and had tears in their eyes. His conclusion was that the Hong Kong authorities and the voluntary agencies were doing a very good job, for which he was very grateful. That was not a Minister speaking, but the last United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

I submit to the House that conditions in the closed camps are at least as good as those in other refugee camps in the region.

The hon. Gentleman quite rightly commented favourably on the work done by voluntary agencies in the refugee camps in Hong Kong. This work is of the greatest importance. I would like to associate myself totally with the hon. Gentleman's remarks and with the praise that he gave to the individuals from a number of different countries who are working for the voluntary agencies. I hope that they will not be discouraged by some recent and, in our view, unjust criticisms of their work.

I cannot, in conclusion, let pass the opportunity to express the Government's admiration for the quite remarkable efforts made by the people and authorities of Hong Kong in caring for so many refugees. They have given temporary asylum to over 100,000 Vietnamese since 1975. In 1979 alone, over 68,000 boat people arrived in Hong Kong. No refugee has ever been turned away. In the words of Mr. Paul Hartling, at a press conference in Hong Kong a year ago,

"We are very grateful to Hong Kong—to the authorities, the Government here and to the people because Hong Kong has given asylum and never, never refused to give asylum to refugees coming here and never forced them back against their will, and treated them well, but of course, they would like, as we would like, to see a solution — a durable solution, for these refugees."

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that the whole House will echo those final words of Mr. Hartling and agree that we need a durable solution to the refugee problem in Hong Kong.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 9 May 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

House of Commons (Painting)

9.35 am

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make.

During the past few years, several hon. Members have made representations to me and to the Leader of the House that a new painting of Members of the House in session should be commissioned. As the House may recall, the last painting of this kind was made in 1960.

After consulting the Leader of the House, who in turn has consulted the Services Committee, I have approved proposals for a new painting to be commissioned from Miss June Mendoza. Miss Mendoza will be given facilities to sketch from appropriate positions in and under the Galleries while the House is sitting. I understand that this preparatory work will begin very shortly.

The new painting will be financed from the sale of prints. There will be no cost to public funds. I should like to add my personal thanks to Sir Robert Cooke, special adviser to the Secretary of State for the Environment, for the part he has played in this project.

PETITION

Concessionary Television Licences

9.36 am

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): The petition that I ask the House to receive today complements the Bill that my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) presented on Tuesday. It asks the House to consider a change in the concessionary arrangements for television licences for the elderly and housebound. It is in the names of Mr. John MacCormack and Mrs. Eunice MacCormack.

It gives me the greatest pleasure to present the petition, and I fully endorse the proposition.

Orders of the Day

Safety at Sea Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

IMMERSION SUITS

'(1) A United Kingdom fishing vessel of 12 metres or more in length shall carry an immersion suit of an appropriate size for each person on board.

(2) The immersion suit shall comply with regulation 33 of the Consolidated Text of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, published on 1986.'.*[Dr. Godman.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 1, in page 2, line 16, leave out 'those sections' and insert

'sections 1 to 3 and section *(Immersion suits)*'.

No. 5, in page 2, line 23, leave out 'and 4' and insert '4 and section *(Immersion suits)*'.

No. 7, in page 2, line 28, leave out 'and 4' and insert '4 and section *(Immersion suits)*'.

No. 9, in page 2, line 37, after '4', insert 'and section *(Immersion suits)*'.

No. 11, in page 2, line 41, after '4', insert 'and section *(Immersion suits)*'.

No. 13, in page 3, line 11, after '4', insert 'and section *(Immersion suits)*'.

Dr. Godman: Many fishermen will not welcome the new clause, as their attitudes and beliefs are overwhelmingly conservative. I can say that with some conviction as my father, an honourable and decent man except for the fact that he was a life-long Tory, had that curious mixture of optimism and fatalism which seems to characterise the thinking of many fishermen. Despite the likely reservations of many fishermen, however, I shall press on.

I sincerely hope that the House will support new clause 1. I am privileged to be a sponsor of the Bill. I have heard it said, somewhat unkindly, that the Government have gutted and filleted the Bill. I applaud the efforts of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) as a member of a fishing family and as a member of the Transport and General Workers Union, which still has some members in the fishing industry.

I shall deal first with the size specification of vessel, which is defined in the new clause as 12 m in length or more. That length is specified in the Bill and it is one that is used generally in regulations. For example, the Fishing Vessels Safety Provisions Rules 1975, which were laid before Parliament on 3 April 1975, state, inter alia, that "for fishing vessels of over 12 metres in length to which these rules apply for every person on board a life jacket will be carried."

In my view, the rules and the new clause are not appropriate for open-decked boats of less than 12 m in length. For example, I am talking of the type of boat that is used by lobster fishermen and other fishermen who use static gear mainly for the catching of lobsters and crabs. It would be absurd to impose these regulations on men and crew who are working in very small boats.

[Dr. Godman]

Subsection (2) of the new clause states:

"The immersion suit shall comply with regulation 33 of the Consolidated Text of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, published in 1986."

The foreword to the text states:

"The International Conventon for the safety of Life at Sea 1974."—

—known as the 1974 SOLAS, and the acronym SOLAS is used throughout the text——

"was adopted by the International Conference on Safety of Life at Sea on 1 November 1974."

The fourth paragraph states:

"The Maritime Safety Committee, on 17 June 1983, adopted further amendments to the 1974 SOLAS (1983 SOLAS amendments) in accordance wth the procedures specified in Article VIII and determined that these amendments shall enter into force"——

and this is important even though it relates to maritime vessels—

"on 1 July 1986 unless prior to 1 January 1986 more than one third of Contracting States to the Convention or Contracting States, the combined merchant fleets of which constitute not less than 50 per cent. of the gross tonnage of the world's merchant fleet, have notified their objections."

The articles and regulations in the text refer to merchant vessels and not fishing vessels and my aim is to bring these commendable articles and regulations into the discussion of the provision of life-saving equipment in fishing vessels. Article 1 deals with general obligations under the convention and states that

"the Contracting Governments undertake to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and the Annex thereto, which shall constitute an integral part of the present Convention. Every reference to the present Convention constitutes at the same time a reference to the Annex."

I make no apology for quoting at length, because I am dealing with a first-class guideline for the safety of fishermen as they go about their hazardous work. Article 1*(b)* states:

"the Contracting Governments undertake to promulgate all laws, decrees, orders and regulations and to take all other steps which may be necessary to give the present Convention full and complete effect, so as to ensure that, from the point of view of safety of life, a ship is fit for the service for which it is intended."

Surely that should apply to fishing vessels as well. I know that there will be no dispute about that. Article 2, which deals with application, states:

"The present Convention shall apply to ships entitled to fly the flag of States the Governments of which are Contracting Governments."

9.45 am

I shall refer to regulation 33 because it is mentioned specifically in the new clause. The regulation is concerned with immersion suits—their nature, their make up and the functions that they must be capable of performing in what inevitably will be extreme and harsh conditions. The regulation provides:

"the immersion suit shall be constructed with waterproof materials such that: 1 it can be unpacked and donned without assistance within 2 min, taking into account any associated clothing, and a lifejacket if the immersion suit is to be worn in conjuction with a lifejacket;

2 it will not sustain burning or continue melting after being totally enveloped in a fire for a period of 2s;

3 it will cover the whole body with the exception of the face. Hands shall also be covered unless permanently attached gloves are provided . . . An immersion suit shall permit the person wearing it, and also wearing a lifejacket if the immersion suit is to be worn in conjunction with a lifejacket;

1 climb up and down a vertical ladder at least 5 m in length;

2 perform normal duties during abandonment"—

that is, the abandonment of the vessel—

"3 Jump from a height of not less than 4·5 m into the water without damaging or dislodging the immersion suit, or being injured; and 4 swim a short distance through the water and board a survival craft."

An important part of the regulation is the thermal performance requirements, which are set out in paragraph 2.2 on page 261 of the text. The requirements are as follows:

"An immersion suit made of material with inherent insulation, when worn either on its own or with a lifejacket, if the immersion suit is to be worn in conjunction with a lifejacket, shall provide the wearer with sufficient thermal insulation, following one jump into the water from a height of 4·5 m, to ensure that the wearer's body core temperature does not fall more than 2°C after a period of 6h immersion in calm circulating water at a temperature of between 0°C and 2°C."

Water is rarely calm when a vessel is abandoned, but the temperature that is specified in the requirements of the suit is important. The requirement is that a suit should protect a man in the water when the temperature is about 0 deg C.

Having explained what is meant by an immersion suit, I shall turn to a discussion of the evidence which I believe substantiates the need for such life-saving gear to be provided for each member of a fishing vessel's crew.

I said on Second Reading that safety at sea has long concerned me, and that concern prompted the new clause. It was a matter of regret for me that I was not a member of the Committee that considered the Bill. I shall never lose my stark memory of the loss, in 1968, of three Hull trawlers—the Ross Cleveland, the Kingston Peridot and the St. Romanus. Fifty-nine men were involved, of whom 58 perished. Many of them were personal friends of mine whom I had been at school with. Indeed, some years later my brother Leslie, a fisherman, married the widow of the skipper of the Kingston Peridot, who was drowned along with his comrades when his ship foundered.

The report of the court of inquiry into the loss of the Ross Cleveland is very relevant to my new clause. As the Minister well knows, the court was convened under the Merchant Shipping Act 1894. The hearings were held in Hull in October 1968, and I attended some of them. Judge Naisby's report was published on 4 November 1968. I shall quote from what he said with specific reference to protective clothing when a fishing vessel is abandoned. In paragraph 27 of the report of the court of inquiry, he said:

"The evidence in this Inquiry demonstrated the advisability of some form of protective clothing being available for the crews of trawlers in the event of a casualty when they had to leave the vessel. This matter is under consideration by the Hull Mutual Insurance Society"—

now, I believe, defunct—

"and perhaps other organisations connected with trawlers, and it seems that a small, comparatively cheap form of such clothing can be obtained of such a size that a sufficient number can be packed in a liferaft."

I certainly do not want us to take up that last recommendation. I believe that immersion suits should be carried on the vessel and not stowed in liferafts. But what the judge had to say is germane to this debate. He made those remarks because of the circumstances surrounding the survival of the mate, Harry Eddom, whose family I know well, and the death of two of his comrades who climbed into the raft with him. The report of the court of inquiry says:

"The mate, who stated that he was in the starboard side of the wheelhouse, said that the vessel heeled over to port"—

it was under considerable icing at the time—

"and that he was able to get out of the starboard door and climbed aft along the casing where he saw two members of the crew in the process of launching one of the inflatable liferafts. The raft was launched, and the mate gave evidence that he was struck by a sea and washed overboard and came to in the liferaft having been pulled into it by the other two men who were in it. One of the flaps of the liferaft had been torn, but they were able to close the other. However, a heavy sea"—

the Ross Cleveland sank off the north coast of Iceland in February 1968, after a force 12 had been blowing with a heavy snowfall—

"washed into the raft taking out a considerable portion of its equipment, including the bailer, but the occupants were able to reduce the water in the raft by improvised means."

The next passage demonstrates the need for my new clause:

"The three men in the liferaft were very differently dressed. One of them had very little clothing on"—

he was dressed in his vest and underpants or, as we would say in Scotland, in his semmit and drawers—

"which was, of course, wet through, and he soon became unconscious and, despite efforts by his companions, died in about one and a half hours. The second occupant of the raft, who was more warmly clad but who was wearing no waterproof clothing, also succumbed to the cold and died a little later. The mate, who was warmly clad and was wearing protective clothing, managed to survive, and about daylight the raft grounded. The mate was able to get out, drag the raft clear of the water, stagger along the shore to an empty house under the lee of which he stayed the night, and next morning was found by a shepherd boy who assisted the mate to reach his home farm where the mate was given hot drinks, dry clothing and put to bed."

I well remember the news of Harry Eddom's survival being announced. He was the sole survivor of that tragedy. I am not for a moment saying that such immersion suits would have saved all of the men, but I genuinely believe that the two laddies in the raft with Harry Eddom would have survived. Only this morning I spoke to my cousin, skipper Len Whur, who, at the time of the founding of the Ross Cleveland, was in command of the Hull trawler, the Kingston Andalusite. That trawler was just two cable lengths away when the Ross Cleveland heeled over and sank but my cousin and his crew were unable to help their comrades.

At 8.45 am today, my cousin said that he would give every encouragement to the new clause because of the survival of Harry Eddom and because, since leaving the fishing industry, he has commanded a survey vessel working in the North sea oil and gas industries, often in appalling weather. That vessel is registered in London. It is a British registered vessel, and every crew member is given the best sort of survival suit. If survival suits can be given to the crews of offshore oil supply vessels, large merchant vessels or other vessels whose keels are laidf on 1 July 1986, why can they not be given to the crews of fishing vessels 12 m in length or more? Under the most trying circumstances, that fisherman watched his mates drown, and he argues for such survival equipment.

The dreadful losses in 1968 all came, if I remember correctly, within about four weeks. They led to the Government of the then Mr. Harold Wilson setting up a committee of inquiry into trawler safety under the admirable charmanship of Sir Derek Holland-Martin. The report, Cmnd. 4114, was published in July 1969, and I know that at least one hon. Member here today was a Member of the House then. The report contained many recommendations including one on survival clothing. Paragraph 105 of what is known to every fisherman in the United Kingdom as the Holland-Martin report says:

"In the first place, the statutory rules on lifesaving appliances do not require trawlers to carry any special clothing for survivors to wear in liferafts. It became clear after the loss of the *Ross Cleveland* north of Iceland in February 1968 that crew members might well reach a liferaft with insufficient clothing to survive in Arctic seas (especially after casualties like capsizing, which can happen suddenly) even though the inflatable liferafts carried on trawlers have canopies which enable the raft to be completely closed."

That is one of the recommendations in a report published in 1969.

10 am

The report continues:

"We recommend that, in the light of these studies, the Board of Trade should take steps to ensure that all trawlers which operate in Arctic Seas carry survival clothing for use in liferafts."

I remind the House that this was an inquiry into deep sea trawling which has largely disappeared. The British fishing industry today is dominated by share fishermen interests. The report continues:

"We also recommend that, in addition, the trawler-owners ensure that cooks, engine-room personnel and other crew members who normally work below decks provide themselves with warm outer clothing suitable for wear in an emergency; these men may never go on the open deck in the course of their normal duties and do not always possess adequate protective clothing at present."

Debates on the Bill and other debates have demonstrated that survival at sea is not, and never will be, a subject for partisan politics. However, it is a subject that must engage the attention of the House from time to time because safety for fishing vessels is too important to be left to fishermen themselves. Successive Administrations have been disturbingly slow in translating such recommendations into safety regulations.

In support of my new clause I refer to a recent maritime tragedy — that of the French trawler Snekkar Arctic which sank 350 miles west of Lewis on Saturday 22 February with the loss of 18 lives. The importance of survival suits was starkly and chillingly demonstrated by those deaths. The *Stornoway Gazette and West Coast Advertiser* of 1 March said that the survivors—that is, the men wearing survival suits—were in the water for three and a half hours before rescue. The weather conditions were appalling. The men who went over the side in just trousers and shirts died very quickly. All French trawlers have to carry a complement of survival suits. The newspaper states:

"Every man on the Snekkar Arctic who had time to don an immersion suit survived. All the others perished. That was one of the facts which emerged when the survivors of the tragedy told their story in Stornoway on Sunday."

The editorial in that excellent paper discussed the tragedy and the attitudes of fishermen to safety equipment and referred to the relatively large sums involved in purchasing such equipment. The editorial stated:

"When the Snekkar Arctic went down nine men managed to get into immersion suits. Those nine survived, even though some of them had not put the things on properly. The 11 others got off the boat, but were drowned or dead of hypothermia long before the 'Dogger Bank' arrived. Those nine lives have surely amply repaid the cost of fitting the French fleet with the suits . . . If there is a criticism to be made of the Safety at Sea Bill, it is not that it goes too far, it is that it does not go far enough. French vessels, and those of some other countries, have to carry immersion suits. British vessels do not"—

the leader writer is slightly adrift there—

"although they are provided on all Royal Navy ships. A Navy spokesman tells us that while men are on deck in foul weather they carry the suits at all times, in the same way that gas masks are carried. When below deck the suits are stored at specified points. Their use considerably extends the life expectancy of the

[Dr. Godman]

user, and it takes under 30 seconds to put them on. The suits cost about £300 each, but even so Britain should join France, Norway, West Germany and Denmark in insisting that they are carried. Grants for their purchase are, apparently, already available."

The article concludes:

"We expect that many fishermen, particularly those old enough to be set in their ways, would object strongly to being made subject to such laws—after all, 'it can't happen to me'. But since 1975 a total of 434 United Kingdom registered fishing boats have been lost. There are nine men in Normandy who will be grateful as long as they live for the strict French safety regulations."

I make no apology for spending so much time on presenting new clause 1. I am grateful for the opportunity to do so. I spoke yesterday to a senior official from the Transport and General Workers Union in Scotland. He is well known to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan. I refer to Mr. Mel Keenan, who is responsible for the fishermen who still sail out of Aberdeen in the ever-diminishing fleet of company-owned trawlers. He is also responsible for the men who work on the standby and rescue vessels which sail round oil and gas rigs in the North sea. The vessels are usually former side trawlers. Mr. Keenan said that he would like survival suits to be carried in all our fishing vessels.

The survival of Harry Eddom in such terrible conditions off north-west Iceland in 1968, the survival of the nine French fishermen two months ago and, more tellingly, the deaths of Harry Eddom's colleagues and of the French fishermen, clearly demonstrate the need for survival suits to be carried on fishing vessels.

I have no doubt that I shall be told that the new clause is technically deficient, but I hope that the principle is acceptable to the Minister and his officials.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for his comments. He has taken a great interest in fishing matters since he came to the House and I am pleased that he decided to be a sponsor of my Bill. I agree that, far from gutting the Bill, the Government have supported its principles, as is evidenced by the clauses which they have accepted.

I listened with care to what the hon. Member said about the compulsory wearing of immersion suits. On Second Reading he argued that that should be obligatory, and he has reinforced his case today. The hon. Gentleman spoke about the sinking of the French trawler in February this year, when 15 fishermen were drowned or missing. Only three bodies were recovered. The nine fishermen who were saved were wearing insulated immersion suits which had built-in life jackets. They cost £300. An immersion suit can be worn in conjunction with a life jacket or designed with an inbuilt life jacket, which can be classed as a life jacket.

A suit without inherent insulation should permit a wearer's body core not to fall more than 2 deg C during a submersion of one hour in water at a temperature of 5 deg C. An insulated immersion suit of the type worn by nine men who were rescued from the French trawler permits the wearer to write with a pencil after he has been immersed in water for one hour at a temperature of 5 deg C. That certainly reinforces the strong conviction of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow in presenting the new clause.

The Merchant Shipping (Life-Saving Appliances) (Amendment) Regulations 1986, which will apply to all but a few British vessels, including some fishing vessels, come into force for new vessels on 1 July 1986. I hope that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow welcomes that. The regulations will introduce, for the first time a requirement for immersion suits to be carried on British vessels. They incorporate amendments to the 1983 safety of life at sea convention requirements which include the provision of immersion suits.

The main thrust of the requirements is that vessels that do not provide dry-shore evacuation and rely on persons going down the side of the ship into the inflatable life rafts —that will be the case with a number of trawlers— should provide immersion suits. In addition, the regulations provide for a rescue boat to be carried on all vessels. The rescue boats for smaller vessels are invariably the inflatable boat type, with a low freeboard and a high spray. The crews of such vessels will be required to have immersion suits.

10.15 am

I am sure that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow will accept that, although the Government intend to apply these requirements to existing vessels at a later date, it was found to be impossible, in legal terms, to impose that requirement in these regulations. However, the Government are preparing regulations which would give effect to that. The hon. Gentleman gave valuable information to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport. He said that immersion suits should be carried compulsorily on fishing vessels. The detailed specifications for immersion suits can be found in schedule 2 of the Government's proposed regulations, which are due to come into effect on 1 July 1986. To date, no manufacturer has won the Department of Transport approval for a suit under the requirements of schedule 2. That is one of the reasons that the Government—I am sure that the Minister will make it clear—cannot bring the regulations into effect.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow shares the concern that I have felt since the conception of the Bill about what the measure will cost fishermen. We have both said consistently that when it comes to saving a fisherman's life we should not ask how much the safety equipment costs.

Sadly, fishermen have resisted the use of modern equipment because of the cost. An uninsulated suit costs £200, an insulated suit costs £250, and an insulated suit with a built-in lifejacket costs £300. The latter type was used by the nine French fishermen who were saved.

The hon. Member made a cogent speech. He presented a strong case for the Bill to provide for the compulsory carriage of immersion suits. Reluctantly I cannot accept his clause. Before explaining why, I should make it clear, that in many circumstances men will wear immersion suits and survive, but in others, they will not wear them. I use the Scottish expression that if a man goes into the sea in his semmit and drawers, he has no chance of survival. A man in an insulated immersion suit must have a chance. The loss of the Snekkar Arctic demonstrated that. I am sure that all hon. Members who support the need for greater safety at sea will join with the hon. Gentleman in recognising that an immersion suit is a valuable piece of life-saving equipment.

The Bill provides for an emergency position indicating radio beacon, automatic release valves for life rafts and the new use of life jackets. Those provisions will enable the safety of fishermen to be substantially improved. All the measures have been well publicised and explained to the fishing industry and have been generally accepted by it.

When the Bill becomes law—I hope that it will pass through its remaining stages today — and when the regulations are made, fishermen will comply with the law, and, because they have been closely associated with its drafting they will do so willingly.

I ask the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow whether the industry has been consulted about his proposed new clause. If a fishing vessel owner has to spend a minimum of £800 on immersion suits, we shall be faced with the problem of trying to persuade fishermen that there is a real need to save their lives. If a fishing vessel owner is asked to spend £800, he will look askance and say, "No." Four of the cheaper immersion suits will cost the owner of an ordinary, small vessel £800. Would fishermen prefer to invest that £800 in that way, or would they like to think that, to improve safety, the money may be better spent elsewhere?

My information is that the industry has not considered the terms of new clause 1. I intend no discredit to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow because, as we are all aware, it is difficult to pilot through the House a private Member's Bill. Consultation time is limited, because no finance is provided to an hon. Member to help present his Bill. He must do the majority of the work himself and must depend on the good will of interested organisations. I make no apology for the fact that neither he nor I was able to consult industry as fully as we would have wished. I understand that the industry has been unable to give me the answers I wanted about new clause 1.

A decision must be made whether to carry these bulky suits. I say that not in any derogatory sense. They are a little bulky, but they are safety at sea measure and that it the vital aim of the Bill. However, it is best left to the discretion of the owner and the skipper of a fishing vessel to decide whether to provide such suits, until the Government legislate on the matter in the light of discussions with the industry.

I thank the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow for putting the new clause before the House and highlighting admirably the need for securing greater safety at sea through using the most modern equipment. I hope that when the hon. Gentleman hears my hon. Friend the Minister of State he will feel able to withdraw the new clause knowing that his views have been carefuly noted by the Government and that he has not wasted his time in presenting them.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): I come late to the consideration of the Bill. I assure the House, especially the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), that it is not because I am not interested in the subject, but because in recent weeks I have been heavily involved in the consideration of a number of other private Members' Bills. I am extremely interested in the subject, because I have always been concerned with the safety of workers at work. Until now, I have been concerned with workers on land, especially in factories and on construction sites. I know from bitter experience that the worker is not always the best judge of what is good for him in regard to occupational health and safety.

I must begin my belated intervention by joining those hon. Members on both sides of the House who have justifiably complimented the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan on his initiative in introducing the Bill and on all the effort, thought and work he has put into it. Every contribution to the lessening of danger and, above all, the reduction of loss of workers' lives during their work—whatever that work—is of great value.

I read closely, and more than once, the debates on Second Reading and in Committee. I hope that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan will allow me one small word of regret. I read with interest and some amusement of the various demonstrations that he gave, not only upstairs but in the Chamber, of the lifejackets whose use he was advocating. I am sorry that he has not come to the Chamber in an immersion suit. *[Interruption.]* As the Minister is indicating, perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) might have done that, too, to show us in practice whether the suit is cumbersome or heavy.

I cannot bring to bear on fishing any of the expertise shown by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan and by my hon. Friends the Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow and for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), but I know that workers are often contemptuous of safety equipment even when, unlike in this case, they are not responsible for paying for it and are not, therefore, influenced by cost.

I remember when this Chamber was rebuilt after 1945 to replace the one that had been destroyed during the war. This building is constructed of Leicester stone, which is pretty soft, which, during working and especially during smoothing, gives off much dust, which is capable of causing chest ailments similar to those suffered by miners, such as pneumoconiosis and byssinosis. It is interesting that a number of the stonemasons who worked on the building were the grandsons and the great-grandsons of the stonemasons who worked on the building erected after the 1834 fire. The post-war stonemasons were supplied with masks to keep the dust out of their lungs, but I only ever saw one wearing a mask. I often asked why they did not wear masks. One stonemason — and the others said much the same—said, "It's a bit cissy, isn't it?" That attitude is not uncommon among people working in factories who sometimes take a fiendish delight in operating moving machinery without the guards in place. I hope that the Prime Minister will not accuse me of wanting to intensify the nanny state if I say that sometimes we need to legislate for workers in their own interests to secure what they will not secure themselves.

Many of the vessels to which we are referring operate in cold waters. As my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow has said, the difference between life and death is often,a matter of how long one can survive in cold water without being frozen to death. Immersion suits and similar insulating clothing make an enormous difference, as the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan has said. Indeed, he cited graphic figures to illustrate the problem.

All people in the services whose functions may lead them into contact with water are provided with protective clothing of this sort, and so they should be. Nothing is too good for those who devote themselves to protecting their

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fellow contrymen. If we take it for granted that they should not be susceptible to the dangers of cold water without the provision of protective clothing, we cannot justify any ship going to sea without that protective clothing being provided.

I am not very happy with the comments of the hon Member for Banff and Buchan about the July regulations and possible consultation with the chaps who, no doubt, will say, "Leave us to look after our business. We know better than you fellows in Parliament." I do not see any certainty arising from that. The hon. Gentleman said that there was a legal inhibition preventing acceptance of the new clause, but he did not say what it was. I am a little puzzled about what it could be. I could have understood the hon. Gentleman saying that there was a technical fault in the drafting—he must have discovered, as I have many times, that it is not easy for private Members to become experts in drafting—and that we might have to undertake some rewording in a public place. I regret his unwillingness to accept the new clause, even if it needs a little adjustment.

Mr. McQuarrie: I should like to set the hon. Gentleman's mind at rest about the word "legal". Perhaps I should not have used that word specifically and implied its normal meaning in this place. I meant that, as usual, the drafting did not provide what we needed to ensure perfect legislation. The Government are introducing new regulations to ensure that the legislation is correct.

Mr. Mikardo: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He reinforces the point that I am making. Happily, the Bill will leave us this morning with the blessing of Third Reading and will go to a place where there are many lawyers—even more than in this place—some of whom are very distinguished. I have no doubt that they will bend their minds to tidying up any defects that there might be. It would be a blow for common sense if the House indicated its acceptance in principle, but, as the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan said, did little more than give information to the Minister and leant on him a little. If the new clause were incorporated into the Bill, it would lean a lot harder and ensure that practical action is taken with regard to immersion suits.

10.30 am

On Second Reading, in Committee and in his speech this morning, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan said—and we keep saying—that we cannot measure the value of a life in money. Therefore, we should not try to create a balance between the expenditure of a few hundred pounds per man, which is all it is, and life. I understand that the best immersion equipment would cost about £300 per man. One cannot set a few hundred pounds against the grief, sorrow, tragedy and bereavement of a widow and children, apart from the cost to the community. If one puts it at its lowest, the cost to the community is many times greater than the few hundred pounds that the immersion suit would cost.

If it can be done in France, Norway and the other countries that my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow mentioned, why can it not be done here? I do not mind where the money comes from. There was a demand in Committee that the Government should find the money. I do not know enough about the industry to know whether such a demand would be justified or whether the Government would be justified in saying that it is a cost they could reasonably expect the industry to bear, even though it is now run almost entirely on a share basis. I do not know enough about the industry to form a judgment. However, it seems loathsome nit-picking to argue about who should pay when it is absolutely clear that somebody should pay and that immersion suits should be provided.

I shall not be very happy if, as a matter of principle, the House does not incorporate the new clause into the Bill. Some time in the future—perhaps at the onset of next winter, when, heaven forbid, some men are lost because they have been pitched into icy seas without protection—we shall look back on this day and say that the House missed the opportunity to give those chaps a chance to fight through. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan, as so many have, for introducing the Bill, but in all friendship I appeal to him and to the Minister not to obstruct the incorporation of this new clause into the Bill.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I was impressed by the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). It was based upon sound experience of having been at sea and of having lived in a fishing community.

As the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West, which has the fish docks and the fishing industry in it, I had the opportunity to meet the family of my hon. Friend and they are absolutely delightful people. Speaking to people like that and finding out the history of the fishing industry, the losses to families and the way in which the members of the missions have helped people in their bereavement is deeply moving. The new clause may seem to be a small measure, but it could have an immense impact upon the safety and livelihood of fishermen.

A few days before we started the Committee stage of the Bill I had the job of visiting a Mr. and Mrs. Atkins of Holderness road in Hull who had just lost their son at sea. It was a moving experience. It seems wasteful when one hears that the lost man was working on an essentially Spanish vessel operated by one of the British agencies in Plymouth. Mrs. Atkins told me that when one visits the vessel in dock it is always done up and the decks are cleared and so on, but when the vessel goes to sea all concern for safety and the way in which equipment is left on deck seems to be discarded. Although the son of Mr. and Mrs. Atkins was never found, they believe that part of the reason for his loss at sea was the way in which successive Governments have failed to get to grips with the question of the safety of fishermen at sea.

The new clause refers to the carrying of immersion suits. We had a lengthy discussion in Committee about the carrying of lifejackets, and the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) demonstrated those life jackets in the Tea Rooms and Committee Rooms of the House. I admire him for doing so because of the technological changes that have taken place. As somebody who from time to time wears a lifejacket, I was impressed by the equipment that is now available. In Committee we made our decision on lifejackets and the clause refers to the provision of immersion suits which are carried either on the vessel itself or in the liferaft.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow referred to the attitudes of fishermen to safety

equipment. They tend to be dismissive and do not want to be bothered about such matters. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) said, they tend to be contemptuous of them. However, the House is obliged to proceed with changes in legislation that we believe to be in the interests of the people concerned.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I must dissent from my hon. Friend's reference to fishermen being contemptuous of safety. Fishing is a high-risk occupation, and I suppose that that risk is part of the excitement of the job. However, the job is the call of the sea and of fishing, and in succumbing to that call it is possible that people take a relaxed attitude to safety. It is certainly not a contemptuous attitude; they are conscious of the need for safety and are dependent upon each other and on the navigational abilities and skills of the skipper.

Mr. Randall: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. Perhaps "contemptuous" is too strong a word; "dismissive" might be more appropriate. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, who has been to sea, would agree with that.

Whether the attitude be contemptuous or dismissive, my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell)—who represents a fishing port and has had discussions with fishermen—will appreciate that more initiatives could have been taken by those who go to sea, both the owners and the share fishermen. That has not happened and people still go to sea without the appropriate safety equipment.

We appear to be lagging behind other countries, especially European countries, and also other sections of the shipping industry.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that face masks have been provided for workers involved in dirty processes in the woollen industry in Scotland, but they scarcely use them. Therefore, I agree with the comments of the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo).

Fishermen have a practical objection to equipment because much of the processing work in the fishing industry now takes place at sea—for example, gutting, which is done on the deck—and any obstruction adds to the difficulties.

Mr. Randall: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, but we need to distinguish between the carrying and the wearing. There was considerable debate in Committee about whether the lifejackets proposed by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan would enable fishermen to fish and do other work. Concern was expressed about wear and tear on a lifejacket which, in the event of its being needed, might then malfunction.

The clause provides for either the placing of immersion suits in the vessel or packed in liferafts. That is an important distinction. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow dealt with the performance of immersion suits and referred to regulation 33. I do not want to spend time talking about the attributes and the technical specifications of immersion suits, save only to say that the requirement for immersion suits to be unpacked and donned within two minutes is rather important. If it cannot happen within that time scale, they would be useless in certain accidents such as a collision in Arctic waters.

10.45 am

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow said that when such equipment is worn there is considerable scope for saving lives. I found his arguments impressive and I am sure that his personal experience has been immensely valuable to the House. We must remember that the proposal for immersion suits refers only to the fishing industry because they are already mandatory on offshore oil supply and merchant vessels. It is staggering that in this day and age we do not provide such equipment on our fishing vessels. Certainly the French trawlermen are obliged to carry this equipment. Perhaps the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan can explain why it is mandatory in other countries but not in Britain.

Mr. Mikardo: That is a key question. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) said that no one in Britain had yet devised a suit that measured up to the required standard. How have the French managed to achieve that?

Mr. Randall: I was about to ask that question myself. British fishermen are being deprived of proper safety equipment. I was not impressed by the argument of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan that the Government propose to introduce a new set of regulations in July. This Bill is about the safety of fishermen at sea. I am also not impressed by the hon. Gentleman's argument that Britain has not produced equipment of the right specification. If the French can do it, why cannot we?

Mr. McQuarrie: I can give the hon. Gentleman two answers. I said that the compulsory wearing of immersion suits from July 1986 would be obligatory on certain fishing vessels, and that that would be incorporated into the regulations. I also said that I was in full agreement with the Minister that discussions must be held with the industry about fishermen being compelled to wear these suits. We know to our cost that there was not sufficient discussion about lifejackets, and the industry threw out the proposal. Surely the hon. Gentleman accepts that there must be proper discussion with the industry so that we can gain acceptance of our proposals.

Secondly, some French equipment, material, food and other things would not be acceptable under any regulations that the House would want to approve.

Mr. Randall: Today we are talking about provisions for improving safety at sea. The hon. Gentleman has told us that the regulations will be coming in, and will apply to some vessels. However, we do not know to which vessels they will apply. Therefore, we do not know whether we should wait till July or deal with the matter here. I think that we should deal with it today without waiting.

Of course, consultation should always take place, and it has taken place. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow has consulted, and his experience shows that such a proposal could be carried in arguments with the industry.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan said that the specification of the French equipment might not be acceptable here. I do not accept that argument, because, time and again, in many areas we have attempted to formulate a perfect standard for equipment. If that standard cannot be met, the equipment cannot be

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modified. In the meantime, people are being lost at sea. Such arguments are not valid. We should ensure that the amendments are inserted in the Bill.

Dr. Godman: I would look for an initiative being taken by the European Community on that issue. I can well understand why fishermen are unhappy with consultation because the history of consultation between the Government and fishermen's federations is not of the happiest. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) knows that as well as I do. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland was criticised only recently for its failure to consult vis-à-vis the imposition of a ban on monofilament nets in Scottish waters. The hon. Gentleman knows what I am talking about.

Mr. Randall: I shall not add to what my hon. Friend has just said about Scotland. We could wait for an EEC initiative, but we are in 1986, and it has taken us long time even to agree that we should have distress beacons to help Nimrods or civil aircraft when they are searching for men on a liferaft. Therefore, for us to delay longer on the use of the immersion suit is absurd and verging on complacency. Therefore, I want action to be taken.

Talking about absurdities, it seems more than absurd that vessels, particularly distant water vessels, go into Arctic seas in winter when we know that, unprotected, the human body can suffer from exposure in minutes. I find it utterly baffling that in 1986 we allow British fishermen to go into Arctic waters without being fully protected against the possibility of an accident when someone goes overboard or there is a collision. Many other accident can happen. Therefore, we must proceed with the new clause to ensure that that vital equipment is provided.

The other argument that is used is the argument of cost. I cannot accept for one moment that we should be talking about whether we proceed with the provision of those facilities, which can determine whether a person survives at sea, in relation to the cost of that equipment. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan gave some figures. He said that at the most the cost would be £350. I presume that that includes VAT. We could introduce legislation to get rid of VAT. But we are talking about families which may become bereaved — children and widows. We are reconciling that deep loss with a few hundred pounds for the provision of immersion suits. Again, I cannot be impressed by such an argument. We are talking about the saving of human lives. I am not concerned about where the money comes from—whether from the share fishermen, owners or even the Government. It is a small sum that is involved, the sort of sum that a person might spend on a holiday in Spain each year. We are reconciling that with human life. I am sorry; I cannot accept that argument.

I am deeply concerned that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan has taken the line that he has on the new clause. He believes that it should not be inserted in his Bill. The reason that he gave is that in July a new set of regulations will be introduced for that purpose by the Government.

Mr. McQuarrie: The hon. Gentleman should not labour his point about 1 July. The most important factor is the consultation with the industry. As the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) said, it is a matter of whether the fishermen will accept that they will be able to work on deck if they are obliged to wear the suit. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I should be delighted if the clause were inserted in my Bill today, but there would be a problem if it were inserted before the necessary consultation with the industry. I have had to suffer the disasterous consequences of the rejection of the lifejacket issue. I wanted that provision to be made mandatory by the House.

Mr. Randall: Our dilemma is that either we pass the new clause and insert it in the Bill or we lose the opportunity. I feel that many people, particularly those in the trade union movement and many fishermen at sea, might despise us for not being a little more bold in taking the initiative.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow said, it is difficult to get agreement in the fishing industry. Anyone who has talked to people in the various federations and the producer organisations, and those who represent fishing ports, will know how difficult it is to get agreement on these matters. I believe that the best thing for us to do for the sake of fishermen is not to delay, but to insert the provision in the Bill. The Bill will go to another place for further consideration, and there will be other opportunities for consultation before it receives Royal Assent.

As I said in Committee, the initiative taken by the hon. Member for Bumf and Buchan — *[Interruption.]* The problem is that there is sometimes too much bumf around. However, the Bill does not constitute bumf. I admire the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan for taking the initiative. Other parts of the Bill will promote safety in the industry. As the hon. Gentleman knows from the Committee stage, the Opposition were highly supportive of the measures.

11 am

The Bill has been changed considerably and I know that the Minister has had his finger in the pie. We all know what happens with amendments to private Members' Bills. I suspect that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan has had his arm twisted behind his back on this matter. As a result, we shall waste a great opportunity to bring the safety of British fishing vessels into the 1980s, to make us comparable with other countries, and to ensure that we prevent bereavement and families having to live without a breadwinner.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for not being present to hear his speech. I had a detailed account of it from my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), and it must have been impressive. I was absent because I was engaged in urgent discussions in Grimsby last night about whether Conservative and alliance candidates in the local elections should have worn immersion suits before the dunking they were given yesterday. In the end, that proposal was negatived. I was stuck, fuming, in a traffic jam at the end of the A1 this morning.

I commend this important new clause because it gives us the chance to strengthen the requirements for safety and to show the way to an industry that has often neglected its safety, especially on smaller vessels and among smaller firms, to its detriment. More importantly, it has led to the tragic loss of men working in the industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, as a sponsor of the Bill, is passionately concerned about safety at sea, which the new clause would further. However, the new clause represents the central dilemma of the Bill, which we discussed on Second Reading and again in Committee.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) has struck the right balance with his Bill. It is a great achievement, very much to his credit, and it will associate his name with safety at sea. It will be a tremendous achievement for the hon. Gentleman to get his Bill on the statute book, as I am sure he will, because this is an area in which we must legislate. The House has been curiously neglectful about safety at sea. By bringing the matter before the House, the hon. Gentleman has done a great service to the industry and to Parliament.

The hon. Gentleman will agree that there is a dilemma in striking the right balance between what is practical and affordable—what the industry can afford if it is pushed, but what is not too grievous an imposition—and what is necessary and desirable. The hon. Gentleman has got the balance right.

The new clause reveals the dilemma in its most acute form because of the expense of the immersion suits that we are discussing. We must be clear that the new clause proposes a compulsion to carry, but not to wear, the suits. The new clause is not intended to interfere with the work on vessels.

Mr. McQuarrie: It is all very well to say that the new clause contains a compulsion only to carry the suits. At some stage, they must be worn. How can we justify the expense of purchasing the suits if they are put into lockers and left there for ever?

Mr. Mitchell: As with carrying fire extinguishers in cars, one hopes that they will never be used, but there must be provision for emergencies. The sensible motorist makes that provision, and the sensible skipper will provide for an accident. Fishing is a high-risk industry, and statistics show that fishermen are much more at risk than the much-vaunted miners, who constantly tell us about the risk of accident and death in their industry.

It would be sensible to carry immersion suits, and we should impose this provision with justice on the industry. However, the expense involved is considerable. We are discussing not the basic model costing £200, but a suit costing £300. That would be a considerable expense for the owner of a seine netter in Grimsby with a crew of four, five or six, depending on the size of the vessel. Perhaps we should make it a requirement that new vessels should include those suits as part of their basic equipment. There is no problem about space, because the suits, when folded are about the size of a business man's briefcase. They will not take up much space on seine netters, which are cramped vessels. The problem is cost.

We must accept the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow that there is a need for action. French and Norwegian vessels already carry such immersion suits. We cannot say that the lives of British fishermen are inferior to those of French or Norwegian fishermen. British fishermen might not be exposed to more risk since the loss of the Icelandic waters and the big distant-water fleet, but we cannot say that their lives are inferior. French fishermen have many advantages over their British counterparts. They can retire at 55, but the fishermen in Grimsby cannot.

I accept that consultation within the industry is difficult. The industry is not organised for consultation. It is organised on the basis of small entrepreneurs and scattered businesses, and often there is great rivalry between different ports and areas. Fishermen often resent Government interference, which is understandable when one considers the Government's record with regard to the industry. The choice is whether to impose the suits on the industry or not. I accept that there would be howls of protest if we went through a long process of consultation. We must consider whether this is a desirable objective for the industry.

That brings me to my view on how it should be attained. It would be wrong to impose the provision on an industry —certainly the English industry—which is in serious financial difficulties. The many fewer vessels in Grimsby are just managing to pay their way, but they have extreme difficulties. Catches are down. No one has given me a scientific explanation of that. Last year, the fleet was unable to catch the quota for cod, and Grimsby is a cod port. This year, the quota has been substantially reduced, and the price has not been enough to compensate for the loss of catches. Returns are substantially lower. Many vessels are barely making a living. Hardly any vessels are providing a return adequate to finance new investment in the port, with the possible exception of the shore fishers, and that return has to finance the safety measures that we would be imposing if the new clause were passed.

I cannot see how the industry can afford such measures. Fishermen are fishing for a longer time of the year than the original [illegible]ort season because they are trying to catch their quota, and they are often coming back in considerable debt to the agents or owners of the vessel. I know of fishermen who are coming back in debt to the tune of £100 or £200 at the end of the season because the catches are going down. Not even the skippers are getting enough money. The industry will not be able to afford the burden of £300 a suit. That is a considerable cost to impose upon it.

As we are agreed on the importance of the measure and the desirability of this safety factor, the responsibility is the Government's—at least for a substantial proportion of the cost. The Government surely want proper provision of safety at sea. They would not be encouraging the Bill if they did not. Therefore, the Government have the responsibility to provide for the same level of safety at sea as that of the French or Norwegian industries. Their industries are more profitable, so they can afford to finance safety in a way that we cannot.

In Committee, a point was made forcibly, but not answered satisfactorily, about the Government's responsibility for financing safety initiatives at sea, particularly the one proposed in the new clause. After all, the Government provide immersion suits for the crews of fisheries protection vessels, and so concede that they are necessary to people at sea in high risk situations. The Government may reply that the general principle of safety provision is that the employer should provide such aid at his own expense. However, they also concede the principle of making a contribution, through the Sea Fish Industry Authority, to other aspects of safety at sea.

Even more important, the Government breach that principle of the entrepreneur providing for safety with their policy on safety on football grounds. Football clubs are in a difficult financial position. Many clubs might have to close because of the considerable cost of safety provisions necessary to bring the grounds up to modern standards.

[Mr. Mitchell]

However, the Government have conceded the principle of a Government contribution towards providing safety on football grounds. If that provision can be made, why can it not be extended to the fishing industry, where the circumstances are acute and unique? The industry is in real financial difficulties and it cannot afford these safety provisions.

The Grimsby vessels fish way out into the North sea. We have lost the vessels with a westerly capacity—the 12 BUT vessels and the Cat class vessels, tragically for the port. However, the fishermen battle considerable distances into Norweigan waters and into unfriendly Scottish waters. I say "unfriendly" because the vessels are not allowed into port if they are carrying mohofilament nets, which is a crazy regulation.

Fishermen are exposed to considerable danger and they are in a unique position. The Government have seen fit to provide generously for football safety. Such generosity should be extended to safety at sea. The cost to the Government of paying for all, or at least a large proportion, of the immersion suits would be small. The problem must be tackled at some stage. If the Government are to legislate independently for the compulsory carrying of immersion suits, they will have to face the problem then. Why not face it now?

I accept the argument put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow and I accept the difficulties that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan has put in his way. Therefore, the responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of the Minister. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow will listen carefully to what the Minister says. I am sure that he would not want to hold up the Bill. The Minister has it in his power to say that we can incorporate this measure by accepting the principle of a Government contribution to what is generally agreed by both sides of the House to be a necessary safety measure for those in peril on the sea.

11.15 am

Mr. Donald Stewart: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, compared with the aid that the Government have been giving to farmers, the assistance given to the fishing industry has been derisory?

Mr. Mitchell: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. That brings me to the central folly of the Government's handling of the fishing industry. Benefits have been showered by the Government and by an institute about which the right hon. Gentleman and I agree — the Common Market — on agriculture, which, under the treaty of Rome, is to be treated on the same basis as fishing, but those benefits have been denied to the fishing industry. This is true of many other provisions besides safety. For example, research, which is a form of Government investment in industry, has been denied to the fishing industry. The Department that has its responsibilities for agriculture and fisheries incorporated in its title has been niggardly with regard to the fishing industry. I hope that the Minister, who is from a different Department, can remedy that deficiency.

I advise my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow to listen carefully and decide on the basis of the Minister's reply what to do about the new clause. Should he withdraw it to expedite the passage of the Bill, or should he pursue the point? The Minister has it in his power to help us. In the House of Commons we have the responsibility to say what basic provisions for safety should be. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan has wisely seized that opportunity. We are in the business of laying down basic requirements for safety and we should therefore extend the Bill. Perhaps the Minister will help us.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I listened with care and not a little sympathy to the speech by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). I was also interested to hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) said about incorporating the new clause into his Bill. I agree that it would not be appropriate.

My hon. Friend was properly concerned as to whether there has been any consultation with the fishing industry about the compulsory carriage of immersion suits. I can tell him that, as far as the Government are concerned, there has not. However, I can report also that, as part of a review of the safety rules that apply to our fishing vessels, it has been our intention to take up with the fishing industry the question of the carriage of immersion suits — for instance, whether in terms of the vessels' areas of operation, or size, or what other life-saving equipment may be on board, there may be a case for carrying immersion suits on certain fishing vessels. Obviously I would not wish to pre-empt the outcome of such consultation but, if the Government were subsequently to decide that there was a need for a compulsory requirement for the carriage of immersion suits, I can assure the House that the statutory powers to make regulations on this subject already exist in the Fishing Vessels (Safety Provisions) Act 1970. In sum, the proposed new clause is unnecessary because of the existence of these powers. We are consulting the industry on the revision of the Fishing Vessels (Safety Provisions) Rules 1975. The provision of immersion suits is included in the consultation. If the consultations are positive, we already have the powers to secure implementation. In the light of that, I ask the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow to allow the new clause to be negatived.

Dr. Godman: May I, with permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, reply briefly to some of the observations that have been made?

This has been an important debate. I listened closely to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) and I was particularly interested in his observation that no manufacturer has produced a suit that meets the Department's exacting requirements. I readily acknowledge that those requirements must be of the highest order. However, I am given to understand that suits are currently being tested in Norway by its maritime research establishments.

Mr. McQuarrie: In Birkenhead Dunlop-Beaufort is similarly testing suits in order to present them to the Department at an early date. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) talked about the use of immersion suits by people going out to the rigs and the belief by Dunlop-Beaufort that the time will soon come

when fishermen will have to use immersion suits at all times. I was fortunate enough to see suits being tested in Birkenhead during the course of discussions about the Bill.

Dr. Godman: That firm deserves our compliments for arranging with the hon. Gentleman the demonstration that took place in one of its dining rooms. I found that useful. It is a long time since I put on any survival gear, even in a drill. I accept what the hon. Gentleman says and the Government's stipulation that such suits must be of the highest standards.

I am a little worried about the emphasis given by the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) to the cost of the suits. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan asked whether I had consulted the fishermen's associations before tabling this new clause. I am sure that he will accept my word that the only consultations that I carried out were on an individual basis. I did not approach associations such as the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, with which both of us work closely. I mentioned my intention of putting down this new clause to the secretary of the Clyde Fishermen's Association, of which I have the honour to be one of its honorary presidents, along with, I believe, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger). I did not carry out formal consultations.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Formal consultations are not the nature of what goes on in the fishing industry. There is more of constant ear-bashing by skippers and owners about their problems and grievances. On that basis it is fair to say that the skippers and crew members to whom I have talked would not welcome the new clause. That does not obviate our need to deal with the matter if it is proper for safety reasons, but they are hostile to it. That is partly because they are hostile to regulation generally, but mainly because of the considerable expense of installing immersion suits. That is why I am so disappointed that the Minister said nothing about money in his reply.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. One does suffer a lot of ear-bashing in consultations, whether formal or informal, with fishermen. I was talking about formal consultations in the sense of arranging meetings with fishermen when they come ashore. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan well knows that there are only two fishermen in my constituency, so I shall not damage my electoral interests.

This debate has been characterised by a high degree of civility and concern for fishermen and their families and I hope that it is brought to the attention of associations north and south of the border. That, in conjunction with the rescue of some of the members of the French trawler, the Snekkar Arctic, will bring to the forefront of the fishermen's minds the need to carry such equipment.

I, too, am disappointed that the Minister said nothing about costs. Can grants or tax relief be obtained for such equipment? What help can be obtained from the EEC or from the Sea Fish Industry Authority? All those avenues should be explored. I was not too happy with what the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan said about leaving the matter to the discretion of the skippers and owners.

I offer my grateful appreciation to my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo). I suspect that he has even fewer fishermen in his constituency than I, but I am deeply grateful for his presence here today and I welcome his contribution. He brought the issue down to essentials when he asked us to compare the cost of such a suit to the cost of the state of a woman being widowed. That is at the heart of any discussion on cost. My hon. Friend also mentioned the terrible grief suffered by our women folk in our fishing communities. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan talked about a suit costing £300. The Government, with their Social Security Bill, are to provide widows with a grant of £1,000. That is a stark comparison.

I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall). He seems to be securely tied to the dockside in St. Andrew's dock or Albert dock in Hull. I am sure that he will be there for many years. I am grateful to him for the grace with which he changed his description of the attitudes of fishermen from one of contempt to one of dismissiveness. That is in my hon. Friend's favour. He is right to use the word dismissive, particularly as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West. The safety record of the trawler industry in his constituency is lamentable. I speak with real experience of that. That industry has some poor employers, not overmuch concerned with the safety of their employees. My brother, Lesley, was declared redundant after 18 years' service with such a firm and he received the princely sum of £385.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: That point bears reinforcement. Firms have been utterly dismissive of the need for redundancy payments, and when they were forced on them by the Department's decision in the Hamlings case, the owners chose to contest the case in the higher courts. They have a monstrous record and even now are trying to reject the requirement on them to pay redundancy benefits.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I hope that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow will not stray from new clause 1. It contains nothing about redundancy payments.

11.30 am

Dr. Godman: I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I merely used that as an illustration.

My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby said that the central dilemma in the Bill is the need to draw a fine balance and that the House has been curiously neglectful of safety. I accept the importance of cost. My hon. Friend gave the example of a small Grimsby sailor with a crew of five or six who is not earning a great deal of money at the moment. I have considerable sympathy with my hon. Friend about the problems associated with imposing such a safety requirement. Some fishermen are in deep financial difficulties. I also sympathise with my hon. Friend's call for state intervention on the cost of acquiring immersion suits.

I am grateful for the Minister's complimentary comments about my presentation of the new clause. He tells me that the Government have not conducted consultations with fishermen's associations recently, but am I right in thinking that that is being remedied and that the Fishing Vessels (Safety Provisions) Regulations 1975 empower the introduction of measures which require the carriage of immersion suits, after consultation?

Mr. David Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is right except that the provision under which we would make the regulation is the Fishing Vessels (Safety Provisions) Act 1970.

Dr. Godman: I am sorry if I got the title and the year wrong, but I hope that I am not wrong about the assurance. If the consultations go as we hope they will, I understand that the carriage of immersion suits on fishing vessels of 12m or more can be introduced in the near future.

Following the advice of my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby, and as I have no wish to harm the Bill's interests, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 2

TRAINING IN SAFETY MATTERS

'.—(1) The Secretary of State may make regulations for securing that the skipper of and every seaman employed or engaged in a United Kingdom fishing vessel is trained in safety matters.

(2) The regulations may provide that if a person goes to sea on a fishing vessel in contravention of a requirement of the regulations—

(a) he commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2, or if he is the skipper or an owner of the vessel level 5, on the standard scale; and

(b) the skipper and each owner of the vessel is (except in respect of a contravention by himself) liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.'.—*[Mr. David Mitchell.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it may be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 12, in page 3, line 10, leave out 'sections 1 to 4' and insert

'this Part or section *(Training in safety matters)*'.

No. 14, in page 3, line 15, leave out 'Act' and insert

'Part or section *(Training in safety matters)*'.

No. 15, in page 3, line 19, leave out 'Act' and insert

'Part or section *(Training in safety matters)*'.

No. 16, in page 3, line 22, leave out 'Act' and insert

'Part or section *(Training in safety matters)*'.

No. 17, in page 3, line 28, leave out 'foregoing provisions of this Act' and insert

'provisions of this Part or section *(Training in safety matters)*'.

No. 18, in page 3, line 31, leave out

'Act or any enactment amended by this Act'

and insert

'Part or section *(Training in safety matters)* or any enactment amended by this Part or section *(Training in safety matters)*'.

No. 19, in page 5, line 33, after 'Part I', insert

'or section *(Training in safety matters)*'.

Mr. Mitchell: In Committee, I said that it was the Government's intention to introduce on Report a new clause dealing with safety training. As my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) said at the time, he has made headway in persuading the Government that it is right to take a power enabling regulations to be made which require fishermen to undergo safety training. This decision was not easily reached. By temperament, my preference in general is that such matters should be organised voluntarily, but the industry has said that it is prepared to see such a power on the statute book. This, coupled with the knowledge that fishing as an occupation is still four times more dangerous than coal mining, are powerful arguments in favour of compulsion.

In Committee, I also said that it was right for the fishing industry, not the taxpayer, to meet the cost of such training. It was most encouraging, therefore, to learn that at the meeting the following day of the fishing industry safety group the body representative of the views of fishermen's organisations on safety matters, no objections were expressed to the proposal to introduce a new clause dealing with training on this basis.

Subsection (1) provides a simple and flexible power to make regulations on safety matters. These would, by virtue of clause 8(3), be the subject of prior consultation with the fishing indsutry. In the first instance, such regulations would be concerned to apply a requirement for survival at sea training on all new entrants to the industry before they take up employment on a fishing vessel. It seems that this must be the group of fishermen, or would-be fishermen, at greatest risk, and therefore where the industry's additional investment in safety training will yield the greatest benefit in lives saved that might otherwise be lost. This modest start also recognises that the industry has limited financial resources.

Whether fire-fighting and some form of basic first aid training might also be covered by the regulations, at the same time or later, will also have to be discussed with the industry.

Subsection (2) makes it an offence for a person not to comply with the regulations if he goes to sea on a fishing vessel. Similarly, it provides that the skipper and owner of that vessel commit an offence if they allow that person to go to sea in contravention of the regulations. I should for completeness add that the amendments in this group are purely technical and consequential upon this new clause.

Mr. McQuarrie: I welcome what my hon. Friend the Minister has said about new clause 2. It reinforces the fact that training in survival at sea, fire-fighting courses and training in first aid are essential requirements for the fishing industry.

In 1985-86, to 31 March, 4,472 fishermen had undergone survival courses, 2,329 had taken a fire-fighting course, and 712 had taken a first aid course. Moreover, 1,129 young boys received training to the same standard under a youth training scheme, which shows that the Government's initiatives in that direction are working.

I must commend the Sea Fish Industry Authority in Scotland on its diligence. I remind my hon. Friend the Minister that it endorses the proposal that the three training sectors should be legal requirements. In a letter to me dated 23 April, the deputy chief executive said:

"A one-day fire-fighting course is also offered but this is not DOT approved and the content may need to be reviewed by them if the Bill becomes law. First aid should be added and all new entrants, not just school leavers under YTS, should go through the course before going to sea. We also see no reason why the provision of six months should be implemented or for excluding those over 50 who have joined the industry. Altogether, a substantial number of people employed by the catching centre have been exposed to the training that you envisage and the SFIA endorse the proposal that this should become a legal requirement."

I am therefore most grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for proposing the new clause. I support it and commend it to the House.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House pressed my hon. Friend the Minister to introduce a new clause on training. We insisted that one was essential to ensure that training was compulsory. It is no less ambitious than the

clause in the original Bill, but it has the additional merit that the industry and the Government can proceed together in stages to extend safety training on certain subjects to particular groups of fishermen when experience shows that the risks there are greatest. I agree entirely that new entrants to the industry are probably at the greatest risk irrespective of their age.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman has commended the efforts of the Sea Fish Industry Authority. I am sure that he will join me in offering commendation to the members of the now defunct sea fisheries training council, which paved the way for the training of fishermen, especially in the share sector.

Mr. McQuarrie: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing attention to the work of the council. I agree that it should be commended for the great work that it undertook. At the same time, we should not forget existing training organisations. At Peterhead, which is in my constituency, fishermen are put through various courses. The local organisation that is responsible for training undertakes a tremendous amount of work and the success of training organisations generally has led all hon. Members to be supportive of the argument that there is a need to have mandatory training courses.

New entrants to the industry, irrespective of their age, should be obliged to undergo safety courses. They will be at greater risk than experienced fishermen and survival at sea training should be a first priority. However, training will not stop there. As training resources allow and as finance can be found from within the industry, or from whatever source, training must be provided in fire fighting and basic first aid. It would be as well for my hon. Friend the Minister to take note of the need for specific requirements when dealing with safety matters.

I spoke to my hon. Friend about the wording of the clause, especially the passage

"fishing vessel is trained in safety matters."

That phrase has been adopted instead of setting out the three specific areas of training that we are discussing. I am happy to say that my hon. Friend assured me that he wants to ensure that other aspects of safety and training in them that are brought to the attention of the Government by fishing organisations or hon. Members are taken up apart from training in fire fighting, first aid and survival at sea.

It will be necessary to consider which other groups of fishermen could benefit from compulsory training as soon as satisfactory arrangments have been made for new entrants to the industry. The clause is commendable, and I ask the House to accept it.

Mr. Donald Stewart: I welcome the clause, which I think is essential and overdue. I remember taking great objection, along with other hon. Members, to the winding up of training under the sea fisheries training council. Fortunately, some other arrangements have been made. I am pleased to say that more than 90 per cent. of fishermen in the fleets in my constituency have been trained in sea survival techniques. I hope that the training will be extended to cover 100 per cent. of those who go to sea in our fishing fleets.

I agree with the need for training in the techniques which have been mentioned, especially in sea survival. In the Navy it was interesting to receive instruction in elementary techniques that would never have occurred to those who were not normally at sea, such as staying by the vessel in the event of an accident unless it was obviously sinking. The advantages of doing that were explained to us. It would probably be unnecessary to give such elementary advice to fishermen. However, there are other pieces of advice that would lead to the saving of life at sea.

11.45 am

Fire-fighting training will be necessary. There have been two or three examples in recent years of fishing vessels being lost because of fire. The need for first aid training needs no explanation, for we know that accidents are frequent. Most hospitals near to fishing grounds regularly receive fishermen who have been injured at sea. It is obvious that first aid is extremely important.

The Minister should take into account the need for training in radio communication when he comes to draft the regulations. It may not be necessary for every member of the crew of a vessel to be trained in that skill, but boats should carry crew members who have some knowledge of making radio communication. That ability would be extremely useful.

The clause will be one of the most important parts of the Bill, and I hope that the House will give it an easy passage.

Mr. Mikardo: I am not as readily satisfied as the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie). It seems that we have been given a superficial and invalid reason by the Minister for not specifying the major areas in which training should take place. The Minister said that if it were stated that there should be training in A, B and C, that would include and exclude, and that people might say that there need not be training in other matters.

That explanation will not do. There are so many examples in statutes where certain matters have been specified, followed by a phrase such as "any other matters which may be necessary". One example relates to an entirely different area of the law where a form of words is used which could be employed in this instance. I have in mind the obligation that is placed upon public corporations to set up machinery for consultation with their workers about health, welfare, safety, wages, working conditions and other specific matters. That is followed by a phrase such as "and any other matters of mutual interest".

Instead of using the extremely vague term "safety matters" — it is extremely imprecise and woolly — we could use a phrase such as "training in survival techniques, fire fighting, first aid and any other safety matters". That should have been done.

As the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) said, it is essential that the Bill should include a clause covering training. We all agree about that. Unfortunately the clause is a poor, pathetic little fish. The first sentence begins with these words:

"The Secretary of State may make regulations".

That is a form of phraseology that I do not like very much, wherever it occurs. If the Secretary of State may make regulations, he may also not make regulations. It means that there is no obligation on him to do so. If we put the clause in the Bill, we shall not have a provision that ensures that training will take place.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan has told us about all the training that has gone on or is going on, and that is great—I dare say that if the clause had not been tabled some of that training would have continued. However, the hon. Gentleman has told us that the industry

[Mr. Mikardo]

wants training to be statutory. What does it mean by that? It wants to ensure that there is a statutory provision that will guarantee that training will take place. Unfortunately, the clause will not provide that guarantee. The decision whether to ensure that training takes place will lie within the Secretary of State's discretion.

I hope that before we leave the new clause the Minister will seek the leave of the House to speak again, which I am sure will be freely given to him, so that he can tell us with some precision what action he proposes to take, and how quickly, under the clause. It would be much better if the Secretary of State said that he would make regulations or if he could specify the training involved. But we cannot achieve that at this stage of the Bill, although it could be done in the other place.

We need a curriculum. We are laying down educational provisions without stating the curriculum. If there is not to be a firm statement in the Bill that the Secretary of State will make regulations, and if there is not to be any curriculum, we must at least have some assurance on the record from the Minister that we can quote back at him in a few months' time if those deeply concerned about the industry, such as my hon. Friends the Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) and for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) find that training, or adequate training is not being provided.

Mr. McQuarrie: Perhaps I can set the hon. Gentleman's mind at rest. The letter that I received from the Sea Fish Industry Authority indicated that it was in a position to support the courses until 1989, when the financial position would be reviewed with the Minister. That is why I was satisfied that the wording that I discussed at length with my hon. Friend the Minister and the noble Lord was acceptable.

Mr. Mikardo: That is all right as far as it goes. I applaud the hon. Gentleman for having secured that letter and for having got that much on the record. But it does not go far enough. First, it does not go beyond 1989, which is not very far away. Moreover, it makes no mention of the quality or length of the courses, of the subjects covered, or of how effective they will be. We need to know that. What sort of courses will there be, and how long will they last? How seriously will the training be taken? Will chaps get time off, and will they be able to attend full time? What are the teachers' qualifications? What certification, if any, or other evidence that the chap taking the course has absorbed what he has heard will be provided? What proof will there be that he has been listening, and is capable of implementing what he has heard?

Mr. McQuarrie: The hon. Gentleman has taken an extremely wide interest in the Bill, and I am grateful to him for that. But he may not be as aware of the issues involved as the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and I are, as we are deeply immersed in the fishing industry. I have the largest fishing constituency in Europe. The courses are carried out via a national network which is controlled by the SFIA. They run for a specific number of days. The instructors have the highest qualifications. The courses cover fire fighting, safety at sea, survival at sea and first aid, and subsistence and travelling expenses are paid to those who have to travel to the various centres.

Mr. Mikardo: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that information. I had gathered something like that from reading the reports of the Bill's earlier stages. But we are now moving from non-statutory to statutory provision. The Secretary of State may be going to make regulations. He is under no compulsion to do so, although I dare say that he intends to. But I want to know what those regulations will say about the quantity and quality of the courses. They will have to say something. They may merely repeat the provision that the hon. Gentleman has just described. But I should like to know whether that is so, or whether they will go further than that.

Dr. Godman: Perhaps I may add to what the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) said about the funding of training. He said that the SFIA would fund it until 1989, but what will happen to that funding after that? Will the state seek to impose a levy on fishermen to pay for it? Moreover, is not training in agriculture state funded? If it is, training in the fishing industry should surely continue to receive state funding.

Mr. Mikardo: As I said, the provision is all right as far as it goes. But funding will continue only until 1989. After that, we are left with a vacuum. If the industry undertakes to provide training, and can provide adequate resources for doing it properly, all well and good. No one would object to that. But my hon. Friend is right; the state must take a fallback position. If the funds dry up in 1989, or even before then, we must ensure that training does not cease just because the Government have not accepted any obligation to carry that burden.

I do not want to make a great bureaucratic thing out of this issue, and I realise that we are talking about small groups of workers. But I do not attach much value to a form of training in any walk of life that does not lead to some form of certification at the end of it. So far, we know only that a fisherman or skipper will attend a course. There is no mention of him having to work or read papers, or that he will be required to give evidence of the fact that he has taken in what he has heard or is capable of implementing it. Although the groups of workers will be small, should we not examine—as I am little versed in the industry, I put it no stronger than that—whether at sea there should not be the equivalent of what is known on land as a safety officer?

There could be one such officer in each working group. Even in big establishments there are small groups of half a dozen people or fewer in, for example, a department, and one of them has special responsibilities. We all know that when something is everybody's responsibility, it is nobody's responsibility. There is great value in having one person in a working group who is seen as the safety officer by his colleagues. That chap would need to take his training very seriously. He would certainly need some form of certification.

12 noon

Dr. Godman: There is merit in what my hon. Friend suggests because even on the smallest vessel someone should be responsible for good housekeeping and hygiene. Someone should be responsible for safety. Gear should not

be left to block passageways, and decks should be kept clear. We must remember that the shared system is dominant in the industry.

Mr. Mikardo: If some chaps were certificated they would be responsible for good housekeeping. They would ensure that gear did not block gangways because that might delay the crew if there were a fire. If ropes are left around the crew might trip over them. It is difficult on a trawler to keep everything spick and span, but someone must ensure that slippery floors are prevented. Above all someone must be responsible for ensuring that fire extinguishers are where they should be and that they are inspected regularly. A safety officer in a land-based industry would ensure all of that.

Safety is important at sea because, as the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan reminded us, the sea is very dangerous. No one would dream of running a coal mine without certificated trained safety officers. No one would dream of running a coal mine without a safety officer at every seam and for each group of workers, and yet casualities at sea are four times as great as they are in mining.

It is essential to ensure that the standards of safety training certification and the existence of safety officers is no lower than in the mining industry. Nothing in the clause ensures that. Subsection (1) is woolly. It is as woolly as stating that one is in favour of virtue and opposed to sin, without specifying anything on either side of the equation. The clause says that the Secretary of State "may" make regulations for training in safety. The phraseology could not be less decisive.

We shall not change the phraseology today, although the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan might find a noble Friend to steer the Bill through another place and to tighten the new clause.

We must have clear assurances from the Minister that he will make regulations. We must know what they will contain, when he will make them and what they will do.

Dr. Godman: I support the new clause in principle. Fishing is indeed a hazardous occupation with a high accident and death rate.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (M. Mikardo), particularly for his comments on the need for safety officers on vessels. "Safety officer" might not be the right title because all people on a vessel must be conscious of the need for good housekeeping. People on purse seiners, with crews of only 10 or 11, are detailed to carry out those important functions.

The right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) expressed his sincere regret that the sea fisheries training council has been dissolved. As a member of that council, I share his regret. The trainee statistics outlined by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) involve people who first came to training by way of the group associations set up at the instigation of the sea fisheries training council under the excellent chairmanship of Mr. Frank Metcalf. The Scottish fishing industry was well represented on the training council.

I am pleased that the Sea Fish Industry Authority is providing systematic training, particularly for new entrants. I agree with the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan that there should be no age limit and that all entrants should receive training in safety matters.

Fire-fighting training is crucial to all seafarers, not only fishermen. Is the Minister satisfied with the level of provision, and with the quality and quantity of fire-fighting training for fishermen? That is an important element in safety training.

Behind the fire station on McDonald road in Edinburgh there used to be a structure that looked something like a ship. In that simulated ship superstructure fishermen and Merchant Navy officers were trained in fire-fighting techniques. I dodged that appalling experience because I am a fair-weather fisherman. Young fishermen being trained for officer status with British trawler companies would enrol for a three-day course. They were trained to come to terms with trying to find their way out of living accommodation in pitch blackness. If there is a fire in the engine room, invariably the lighting goes and holds fill with smoke, often to toxic levels.

Only a small poportion of fishermen received that training. I understand that the fire-fighting training undertaken by fishermen currently lasts only one day. It is conducted and supervised by local fire brigades. What training do the trainers receive in dealing with fires at sea?

I put it to the Minister that a fire on a small fishing vessel may be quite different from a fire in a small factory, shop, or similar premises. I do not think that only one day devoted to fire-fighting training is acceptable to hon. Members or, more importantly, to the people undertaking such training. I believe that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan said that fire-fighting training as it exists is not approved by the Department. If so there are grounds for considerable concern. We need to look closely at such training. Is it being conducted at the back of a fire station?

Mr. McQuarrie: Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. Fire fighting is carried out at national network training centres under the supervision of the fire brigade in the area of the network. For example, in my constituency, officers of the Grampian fire service commendably go down to the training centre and give a full training course to the fishermen. I agree with the hon. Gentleman's comments. The matter needs to be laid down by the Department in line, chapter and verse. I hope that the Minister will consider these important safety matters.

Dr. Godman: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I readily acknowledge his confidence in such fire brigades. I hope that the fire brigades in Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Aberdeen or points further south and in fishing ports have been trained in fire-fighting techniques in ports and harbours. I do not have the conviction of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan about fighting fires at sea. I repeat, are the trainers trained in the most up-to-date techniques in combating this dreadful menace at sea, not just when a vessel is tied up in a harbour? I put those questions in all seriousness.

Will the Minister give assurances about the quality and quantity of such training? Do fishermen receive refresher training in fire fighting? Are changes in the design of vessels a consideration in retraining in fire-fighting techniques? The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan will readily acknowledge that there is much difference between an aging Aberdeen side trawler—in terms of design, layout, crew accommodation, fish room, and so on—and the most modern Norwegian designed purse seiners sailing out of Whalsay, or perhaps towns in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Is the Minister satisfied with the provision of first aid training for fishermen? What is the quality of such

[Dr. Godman]

training? I am not embarking on a knocking exercise. I am not demolishing, castigating or denigrating the activities of the training specialists with the Sea Fish Industry Authority, the senior member of which is one of the finest training officers in western Europe, Mr. Ken Waind, who worked with the sea fisheries training council for many years. Is the Department satisfied with the quality of the training in first aid techniques which is offered to fishermen or which fishermen undertake compulsorily?

12.15 pm

Survival training is important. I understand that wet survival training consists of a three-day course, usually conducted in the local swinning baths. The trainees have to enter a raft while fully clothed. It might be worth considering that part of survival training, because in future men may have to enter a raft while attired in a survival suit. That matter may need to be considered by the Minister and his officials. Are drills considered to be part of survival training?

Mr. David Mitchell *indicated assent.*

Dr. Godman: The Minister nods his assent. I am pleased to receive such an assurance, even from a sedentary position. I sometimes wonder how regularly drills are conducted. I have seen entries in log books that do not accord with what has taken place. Does survival training include the need for taking part in drills?

I should like regulations to incorporate the requirement that all entrants should undergo compulsory pre-training. I should like also regular medical checks of established fishermen. However, that may not have much to do with training. I should like to see the establishment of refresher training.

Is the Minister able to answer a question about funding the training function? A few minutes ago, in response to an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan said that such funding would be provided by the Sea Fish Industry Authority until 1989. What will happen after 1989? The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan and I know of the serious reservations of fishermen about a levy on their landings to be used for training. I am sure that my hon. Friends the Members for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) and for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) have also encountered those reservations—another form of ear bashing. Members of the sea fisheries training council were deeply unhappy at the prospect of a training levy being inflicted upon them following the dissolution of that excellent training body. Is it the case that in agriculture training is not paid for by the farmers? Does the state provide training in that industry? If the answer is yes, surely the same should hold for the fishing industry.

Mr. Randall: I think that we are all pleased with the new clause, and the reason is clear. The fishing industry is extremely hazardous, and anything that saves lives must have our attention. In principle, the Labour party is pleased with the new clause, but we have some reservations about its form.

It is crucial that fishermen should undergo training. There is no question about that. Whether such training is provided voluntarily by the industry or by the state is not of prime importance; it is important that the training takes place. The Minister said that fishing was four times more hazardous than coalmining, which was an interesting measure of the seriousness of the problem. By extrapolating the results of safety and training measures introduced in the coal industry, we can produce the type of arguments which hon. Members have already advanced this morning to strengthen the case for the new clause.

I am glad that the industry is prepared to support the notion that a training measure should be laid down in statute. Presumably, it is prepared to contribute to the fees associated with such training. I hope that the Minister will clarify that point.

If fishermen undergo training, lives will be saved. It is therefore important for it to be comprehensive and effective. A new training regime that is not sufficiently comprehensive will not save lives. We have shown that we all desperately want to save lives by supporting the new clause in principle.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Popular—my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) is also popular—mentioned that the new clause was not sufficiently specific about the training aspects that should be embraced. Subsection (1) states:

"The Secretary of State may make regulations".

We all know as legislators that that is a weak part of the sentence. "May" implies that the Secretary of State will either make the regulations, or he will not, according to his views. I question whether it is advisable for the House to give such discretion to the Minister in view of the importance of the matter which has been highlighted by hon. Members. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar, I should like the first part of the new clause to be strengthened to ensure that we know what specific training aspects will be introduced. We want to ensure that they are all sufficiently comprehensive.

Hon. Members need to know what departmental action will ensue. We want to be able to monitor that action so that when we hear from people in the industry of instances in which training has failed we can question the Minister at the Dispatch Box and ask for a statement that training standards will be of the appropriate quality.

The point raised about the trainers is crucial because we all clearly know that to have inferior trainers who do not have appropriate knowledge of the details of safety on board fishing vessels would render training arrangements to an unacceptable form. We must ensure that those who attend training courses are issued with a certificate signed by the appropriate authority and showing that the fisherman has undergone training.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar, supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), referred to having a safety officer on board the fishing vessel. It might seem a little absurd to have such an officer on board a small vessel with only three or four fishermen—it is difficult to sustain the argument in that case—but it would be a good idea to have a person responsible for ensuring that safety rules were adhered to on board fishing vessels with a crew of nine, 10 or 11, such as those that operate from Scotland.

People in my constituency have told me that equipment lying around on deck can fall and cause fishermen to lose limbs, their fingers or a hand. These are regular occurrences which often ensue from situations where equipment is left on deck where people can trip over it, fall down hatches and so on. Someone should be made responsible for safety, as with fire officers in buildings and

office blocks, whether public or private companies. A fire officer is usually responsible for a certain part of a building so that in the event of a fire, or even during training, he is there to advise and guide and ensure that people know what to do in the event of a hazard or fire.

12.30 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Is my hon. Friend aware that in the mining industry, to which reference has been made by comparing accident statistics and hazards, there is usually someone with special responsibility for safety even in groups as small as four or five? The predominant training aspects in the mining industry are safety and health rather than production.

Mr. Randall: I am grateful for that intervention, because it is an interesting parallel and it shows that the absurdity I mentioned earlier may not be sustained when one can see that there are safety officers in the mining industry for small groups.

That is especially important, where skippers, who should have overall responsibility on a boat, fail to be responsible for safety. I was told of an example about two years ago and I sent information about it to the Department of Transport. It referred to two young trainees who were on a Spanish fishing vessel that had gone on to the United Kingdom register. That technique has been used extensively by the Spanish fishing vessel owners. They have agents in places such as Plymouth and they have so far ducked inspection by the Department of Transport and get away with blue murder. Some of my constituents told me the story of those two young trainees. I could not establish whether they were on statutory or private training schemes. However, they were nearly decapitated. They were very young, only about 16 or 17 years old. The agent was asked what training the skipper had to offer. In that instance we found that the skipper spoke only Spanish and he was responsible for looking after and supervising training. It is ludicrous to have a trainer who does not even speak the same language as the trainees, and it resulted in two young people nearly being decapitated.

Mr. Mikardo: In case there is any confusion about whether small groups need a safety officer, I can say that not only the mining industry provides a safety officer for groups as small as four or five. Surface industries do so, too. For example, in a large factory with many people one can have a specialist store, such as an embodiment store, where only four or five people work. One of them is always a safety officer.

Mr. Randall: As we proceed with the debate it is interesting to see that we are establishing the fact that there are a number of precedents for this kind of safety officer, or whatever we would call him. That is encouraging.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) referred to the Sea Fish Industry Authority and funding. I am glad to hear that he has been in contact with the SFIA and that at least some short-term funding would be available. That is very encouraging and one presumes that it would enable training to proceed. The SFIA is a statutory organisation, and like all such organisations it is currently suffering from cuts in its funding. I wonder how it will find the money for this training programme. I am also concerned that subsection (2) is unspecific. With the tightness of money and an unspecific provision, we might end up with a tatty form of training. Will the Minister comment on that?

Dr. Godman: I understand some of my hon. Friend's reservations about the SFIA, but in fairness I must point out that its involvement in training is carried out by competent, highly trained people. Surely the question at issue is the continuation of funds for training.

Mr. Randall: My hon. Friend is certainly right on his latter point. Continuation of funding is absolutely crucial, but we are in the dark on that point. I have a great deal of time for the SFIA as an organisation and fully accept that it has many skilled people. However, we are talking about a not insubstantial programme of fishing training, and it surprises me to learn that the SFIA has the money to fund it. If it has, I am glad.

I agree with my hon. Friends that training should take place for all people, irrespective of age or whether they are on a youth training scheme for a limited period. It is important that before people go to sea they have the necessary training to ensure that they are protected and can help to protect others on the vessel.

Under subsection (2), if someone goes to sea without training he will have committed an offence and be liable to a level 2 fine. If the skipper or the owner of a vessel commits an offence, he will be liable to a fine not exceeding level 5. I am not sure about the fines for level 2 and level 5, so perhaps the Minister could explain. If the fines are not large, there could be an incentive for the owners and skippers not to adhere to the rules.

I have already referred to the Spanish fishing vessels being operated by such companies as Clearmaine in Plymouth. I do not have much time for the operations of such cowboys. I know about the appalling treatment of men who go to sea on these vessels, and I want to ensure that such organisations do not feel that they can pay the fine and not bother to embark on a training programme.

Dr. Godman: My hon. Friend has raised an important point about subsection (2). I, too, am a little unhappy about it because it appears that the responsibility for determining whether, for example, a young lad of 17 has been trained rests wholly and solely with the skipper. Such a young man could be encouraged to sail on a vessel although he may be in complete ignorance of the rules. Does my hon. Friend agree that the responsibility should rest with the master of the vessel?

Mr. Randall: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. Subsection (2) reads:

> "The regulations may provide that if a person goes to sea on a fishing vessel in contravention of a requirement of the regulations—
>
> *(a)* he commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2, or if he is the skipper or an owner of the vessel level 5".

Paragraph *(b)* states:

"the skipper and each owner of the vessel is . . . liable on summary conviction to a fine".

Mr. Austin Mitchell: As well.

Mr. Randall: That is absolutely right. Fines can be levied on both the person who goes to sea, and the skipper or the owner.

Dr. Godman: This is an important point of principle. In what other industry is there such a regulation whereby the person who has not sought training faces the possibility of court action? Young lads might be ignorant of such a statutory requirement.

Mr. Randall: That is an interesting point. I should iike the Minister to answer that question because it is he who drafted the clause. That is a valid point. Is that discriminatory in that industry as opposed to other industries? I do not want to pre-empt the Minister's reply, but I imagine that the reason why the clause has been put in that some boats might have very small crews, but I shall leave that form is that matter for the Minister rather than trying to anticipate what he will say.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow also supported the notion of some sort of training officer. I was particularly interested to hear about fire-fighting. I shall not develop the argument to a great extent, but it seemed that, in making that point, my hon. Friend was referring to the quality of the trainers. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan knows of instances where the local fire brigade comes in and does the training. I presume, although I cannot be sure, that the fire brigade ensures that it up to date on the latest technology of fire fighting in a confined diesel engine quarter on board a vessel. It is a specialised form of fire-fighting. It is important to have an assurance that the quality of the trainers would be up to the necessary standard.

Mr. McQuarrie: As the hon. Gentleman represents a fishing constituency—we both do—I am sure that he will be aware that the fire authorities take care that they know the latest fire fighting techniques for all modern ships. As was said by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), the fire fighting people have to be up to the mark on the latest techniques because of the possible dangers in harbours. For example, Peterhead is a busy harbour. Any one vessel on fire could create a catastrophe unless the fire fighters were familiar with the latest methods.

Mr. Randall: The whole point is whether the matter is dealt with in statute or whether we reply on the local authority which controls the fire brigade.

In principle, we ar happy with the notion of new clause 2. However, it needs considerable tightening up along the lines that I have suggested. It would be better to be more specific in the areas that we cover. In particular, we should include survival, fire fighting and first aid. The clause should be worded in such a way that the Minister could add any other area of training that he deemed desirable. I shall not attempt to phrase that now, but it could be done in an acceptable way. Bearing in mind the points that I have made on enforcement, the Opposition are happy in pinciple with new clause 2.

12.45 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell: This important new clause arises from the assiduous efforts of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), who prised it out of the Government. The original Bill included the provision, which was withdrawn at the Minister's suggestion because he wished it to be clear that the industry should finance training.

The Bill now contains a commitment to and requirement for training, which is an important advance. It is important because the industry's record on training, although it has been self-congratulatory, has been disappointing and poor. It was especially poor in the days of the big owners who fished in Icelandic waters. The port of Grimsby was dominated by a small clique of big owners running large vessels and fishing on an enormous scale. They were making money for the day and paying no attention to the future or to training.

The position has not improved with the change in the industry. The big owners have gone, but at least they formed a coherent organisation, even though it was a mafia. It has given way to a collection of small business men working on a small scale and not paying attention to training. Therefore, training has had to be encouraged from outside. The training of fishermen has a long history of pressure from outside producing change in the industry. I hope that it will be pushed further by the new clause.

Dr. Godman: On the history of training in the industry, is my hon. Friend aware that the record in the traditional inshore sector before the advent of the sea fisheries training council in the late 1970s was abysmal?

Mr. Mitchell: I entirely agree, and that is what makes me emphasise the pressures from outside the industry. Training is not adequate at present, and we must keep up the pressure on the industry.

Fishing is extremely perilous. If people are sent to sea inadequately trained in all safety matters — fire or survival — they are put at an unjustifiable and serious risk. We have a responsibility to provide training through this new clause.

I hope that the Minister will answer the questions at greater length than he did the questions on the previous new clause. When he spoke briefly on the previous new clause, I thought that he was taking to heart my comments on Second Reading when I accused him of spinning out his reply in an attempt to talk out later legislation. That accusation cannot be levelled at the Minister today in the light of the remaining legislation on the Order Paper. I hope that he will give us a more adequate reply to the questions that have been asked about new clause 2.

First, the definition of training in the Bill is deficient. It is not specific enough and will be interpreted in a restricted fashion. The industry must be pushed into change and adequate training. If we retained the simple and complacent definition of training in the Bill, the pressure would be that much harder to apply because people would not exert themselves. The Bill should set out specific areas in which training should be applied rather than contain a general definition. The Minister held out the possibility of training in fire fighting and survival. He can make that prospect a firm reality by specifying it in the Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) said, why should the definition be so restrictive?

Secondly, as has been pointed out, the new clause does not insure that training will take place, and we need to be sure of that, It is not so much good making a statement of good intentions — we all do that — as providing the backing and the framework for the training and the courses that will ensure tha the training is carried out.

Thirdly, we come back to the vexed question of cost. The insistence that the industry finances its training is untenable because of the financial state of the industry. There will be a horrendous reaction to a training levy, which will be bitterly resisted. That will set back training because the levy and training will become indentified, which will prejudice the industry against training.

What is more, the suggestion comes ill from a Government who have not advanced training and who

have given a severe blow to training in the fishing industry. Three or four years ago, they abolished the sea fisheres training council, which was a viable organisation providing good courses and training, was working well and stimulating the industry to train. I think that it was financed by the Manpower Services Commission, but it was financed independently, and did a good job. It was well run and was far-sighted because it involved people from the industry and good courses. I welcomed the efforts that it made. It was a creation of the Labour Government, which might have prejudiced this Government, but it was vandalism to abolish it.

We then had the substitute of the Sea Fish Industry Authority training section, which is financed by Government. Its finance continues to the end of this year. The government have accepted a commitment and should sustain it in view of the financial position of the industry. The Government seem to sustain that commitment in other industries, especially in agriculture, the spoilt darling of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. As the Minister has the portfolio, can he tell us what is the position with Merchant Navy training? Is it financed completely by the industry or is there Government input? I do not see a training levy as being acceptable to the industry.

The clause is welcome, but we are worried about the way in which the promise implicit in it will be fulfilled. We hope that with Government support—about which I hope the Minister will tell us—we can persuade the industry to pay more attention to training.

Mr. David Mitchell: The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar raised a series of questions about why there were no details of courses and the curriculum. It would not be appropriate to put the details of that in primary legislation and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) says, those involved in the industry are aware of the training that is available. To help the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar, I point out that the Department will approve the curriculum when it comes, and some idea of it can be gained from the courses that are carried out as survival at sea courses by the SFIA, the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations.

For example, I have here a copy of the courses that are used. The courses are on such matters as action before abandonment, drills and their value, use of liferafts, clothing and the importance of maintaining body heat, panic and its consequence, and abandonment.

The course also contains liferaft drill, description and use of liferaft ancillary equipment, water entry from height and righting a capsized liferaft. There are also various survival measures such as protection which includes such matters as the treatment of injured survivors, and the problems of water and food which includes such matters as survival rations, and medical aspects, including hypothermia and cold injuries. There is also the important matter of helicopter rescue techniques. Now that the coast guard service has much better equipment, accidents can be located more quickly and rescues made.

The Fishing Vessels (Safety Provisions) Regulations 1975 recognise that skippers of vessels over 12m must ensure that crew members are trained in the use of life saving equipment and that training is carried out at monthly intervals.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar also called for the provision of safety officers. He may have failed to recognise — I do not blame him because he is not intimately involved with the industry—the duty which is placed on a skipper to be responsible for safety. The hon. Gentleman also called for certificates to be issued to those who completed training courses, as did the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall). I can assure him that we shall ensure that certificates are provided.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) asked about fire fighting. A two-day course on fire fighting approved by the Department of Transport can be attended by fishermen on a voluntary basis and there is a one-day course which is not approved by us. Where courses are approved the Department is satisfied with the standard of the course. I accept that there are no arrangements at present for refresher courses for fire fighting, and I shall bear that in mind. The hon. Gentleman also asked about first-aid training. That is necessary for skippers and second hands to obtain certificates of competence, so that is adequately dealt with.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West asked who pays. He may recall that there was considerable discussion in Committee on payment. The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) made it clear that he thought it appropriate for all training costs to fall on the industry, and I do not dissent from that view. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West also asked whether we intended to use the powers that we are seeking in the new clause. I can reassure him that it is our intention to do so, subject to agreement with the industry about payment.

I was also asked about Spanish flagged-in vessels. I readily recognise the widespread unease about such vessels, especially in the south-west. Surveys in accordance with the Fishing Vessels (Safety Provisions) Regulations 1975 have been completed on 43 ex-Spanish vessels that are flagged onto the United Kingdom flag. The standards applied were exactly the same as on other United Kingdom fishing vessels. There are currently a further 14 ex-Spanish fishing vessels. Of those, one is undergoing survey, another has been detained at Plymouth, three are laid up in Spain, and the remaining nine are operating and are overdue for survey. The problem with them is that they rarely come to the United Kingdom. Renewed efforts are being made to get surveys carried out on them or to get them off the United Kingdom register. I am sure that hon. Members welcome that.

1 pm

Language has been mentioned. Section 48 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1970 enables a superintendent to order a ship not to go to sea if he thinks that the crew do not have a proper knowledge of English. That is an important consideration in regard to the Spanish vessels.

I was asked about the level of fines. I believe that I can give the House the assurance that it seeks. Level 2 is £200 and level 5, which applies to the skipper, is £2,000. Hon. Members will agree that they are pretty effective and powerful deterrents to abuse.

In view of that additional explanation, I hope that the House will feel it right to accept new clause 2.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

Mr. Jack Thompson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you give me some help and guidance on a matter that has come to my attention this morning? It is

[Mr. Jack Thompson]

reported in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* that a Minister in the Department of Education and Science has offered misleading information about his educational qualifications in his "Who's Who" entry. It is important to me and others in education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I have no responsibility for what appears in *The Times* or any other newspaper.

Clause 4

POWER TO PRESCRIBE FURTHER REQUIREMENTS

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 2, line 16 leave out 'those sections' and insert 'sections 1 to 3'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 3, 4, 6, 8 and 10.

Mr. Mitchell: The amendments in this group are of a purely technical and drafting nature.

Amendment No. 2 makes it clear that regulations under clause 4 can provide more detailed requirements for the duty in clause 3 to carry lifejackets, and not just for the duties in clauses 1 and 2, for example, regulations can be made specifying where the lifejackets must be carried, such as some on deck.

Amendment No. 3 is a purely drafting amendment, to make it clear that, where there is a reference to section 1, 2 or 3, it is a reference to the section as amplified or extended by regulations under clause 4. Amendments Nos. 4, 6, 8 and 10 make drafting changes consequential on this. The amendments will make the bill read more easily.

Mr. McQuarrie: I have had considerable discussions on these amendments with my hon. Friend the Minister and my noble Friend the Minister with responsibility for shipping. I accept that they are drafting amendments and I am happy to ask the House to accept them.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 3, in page 2, line 19 at end insert—

'(2) References in this Act or elsewhere to the requirements of sections 1 to 3 are to those requirements as amplified or extended under this section.'.—*[Mr. David Mitchell.]*

Clause 5

ENFORCEMENT

Amendments made: No. 4, in page 2, line 23, leave out '2 and 4' and insert 'and 2'.

No. 6, in page 2, line 28, leave out ', 2 and 4' and insert 'and 2'.

No.8, in page 2, line 37, leave out '4' and insert '3'. —*[Mr. David Mitchell.]*

Clause 6

OFFENCES

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 2, line 41, leave out '4' and insert '3'.—*[Mr. David Mitchell.]*

Clause 7

EXEMPTIONS

Amendment made: No. 12, in page 3, line 10, leave out 'sections 1 to 4' and insert:

'this Part or section *(Training in safety matters)*'.—*[Mr. David Mitchell.]*

Clause 8

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS AS TO REGULATIONS

Amendments made: No. 14, in page 3, line 15, leave out 'Act' and insert

'Part or section *(Training in safety matters)*'.

No. 15, in page 3, line 19, leave out 'Act' and insert 'Part or section *(Training in safety matters)*'.

No. 16, in page 3, line 22, leave out 'Act' and insert 'Part or section *(Training in safety matters)*'.

No. 17, in page 3, line 28, leave out 'foregoing provisions of this Act' and insert

'provisions of this Part or section *(Training in safety matters)*'.

No. 18, in page 3, line 31, leave out

'Act or any enactment amended by this Act'

and insert

'Part or section *(Training in safety matters)* or any enactment amended by this Part or section *(Training in safety matters)*'. —*[Mr. David Mitchell.]*

Clause 13

POWER TO EXTEND PROVISIONS TO OTHER TERRITORIES AND VESSELS

Amendment made: No. 19, in page 5, line 33, after ' Part I', insert

'or section *(Training in safety matters)*'. — *[Mr. David Mitchell.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

1.3 pm

Mr. McQuarrie: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

In its leader article of 24 April 1986, *The Press and Journal* said:

"If but one life is saved by these changes now in sight it will be time and money well spent and Mr. McQuarrie is to be congratulated on his persistence in the face of opposition from within sections of the Industry itself, let it be said, in pressing forward his Bill. He can claim if the modified measures eventually become law, to have achieved significant advances in making life less hazardous for the seafarer."

I am grateful to the *Fishing Journal* for its considerable support for the Bill. In its leader of 2 May, the *Fishing News* said:

"while his Bill is certainly not in the form which he envisaged, at least he has drawn attention to the tragic safety record in the fishing industry, and the Bill will still make a contribution towards improving safety."

I am grateful to Harry Barrett, managing director, and Ian Stewart, the editor of *Fishing News*, for the massive coverage which has been given to the Bill to highlight its importance in improving safety at sea for fishermen.

Little did I realise when I secured fourth place in the ballot for private Member's Bills in September 1985 how much time and effort I would need to devote to the relatively simple matter, as I then thought, of making life a little safer for fishermen. I am wiser now. The process of setting down precise and effective proposals for radio beacons, automatic release arrangements for liferafts, the carriage of lifejackets on small fishing vessels and training

has been difficult and challenging. It has also been immensely worth while. It was a process which I started but I was assisted greatly subsequently by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. I am grateful for that help.

It is only right that I draw attention especially to the invaluable advice and support that I have received from my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport, and my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State with responsibilities for shipping. I thank the shipping industry for its close and sympathetic interest in the Bill.

I cannot let this occasion pass without expressing my grateful thanks to colleagues on both sides of the House for their wholehearted support for the Bill, including the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), who spoke so eloquently from the Opposition Dispatch Box today. I am deeply grateful to him. I thank the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for his wonderful contributions. I must include also in these thanks the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) and the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart). The right hon. Gentleman has been present throughout every stage of the Bill's consideration and I am grateful to him for his support.

The frustrations which have been felt in not obtaining some of the provisions that we all wanted to see in the Bill have been overcome to a great extent by the support that has been given to me throughout the Bill's various stages.

I wish to thank also Mr. Andrew Thomson, Mr. Terry Hayward and the staff and work force of Dunlop-Beaufort for the tremendous assistance which they have given to me in promoting the Bill.

There are many others who have given support and they are too numerous to mention. I hope that they will see the passing of the Bill as yet another step in creating improved safety measures for the industry. That is what the Bill seeks to do for an extremely important industry and for those who go down to the sea and provide us with the fish for our table.

The sea is a dangerous place, and being a fisherman is a dangerous occupation, and it will always be so. Nevertheless, I think that the Bill can make a small but significant contribution to the fisherman's safety. I hope that in another place the Bill will be regarded in that light. If it saves fishermen from drowning, means fewer widows, fewer sorrowing parents and fewer fatherless children, and results in less need for tears and mourning, it will have achieved what many of my constituents asked me to do. I hope that the House will allow it to proceed to another place on its way to the statute book.

1.8 pm

Mr. Donald Stewart: I wish to make a short intervention to congratulate the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) on his Bill reaching Third Reading. Tragedies at sea are nothing new, and there was a great need for some tightening of safety procedures to ensure safety as far as possible for our fishermen. There have been several tragedies off the north of Scotland even during the time that the Bill has been passing through the House.

I regret that the requirement for the wearing of lifejackets that was set out in the original Bill has not been achieved. As I said at that time, it seemed that there would be little interference with fishermen working on deck if they wore the lifejacket that we saw at an exhibition. I am pleased that the safety clause has been introduced. Some caveats were entered but it is important that it will now be a statutory requirement for a fisherman to receive some training in safety.

The debates which I have attended have been marked by co-operation and helpfulness from the Minister. That can be said of him throughout the Bill's various stages. I congratulate the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan again. He has done a service to the fishing industry and to the fishermen themselves. That may not be appreciated all the time by everyone, but those of us who can stand back and who know something about the industry realise that he has performed a signal service. I am sure that he will have the thanks of fishermen and their dependants in the years ahead.

1.9 pm

Mr. Mikardo: I, too, will keep the House for only about a minute. May I first warmly thank the Minister for the comprehensive answers that he gave to the questions that I raised during the last debate?

I join in congratulating the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) on piloting the Bill through the House. He deserves his success not only because the Bill is worthy, but because of his forthcoming attitude towards the interventions made and to the ideas put forward by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I am a great eater of fish. I never put a knife into a piece of fish without giving a silent thanks to the fishermen who have gone out to catch it, especially during the bad weather of last winter.

I do not have any fishermen in my constituency, but there is a large fish market there and its prosperity and the employment of some of my constituents depend on the work of those fishermen. They do a great job for us all. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan was being a bit modest about the Bill, but it is something that the fishermen well deserve. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on it, and hope that it will have as pleasant a passage in the other place as it has had in this House.

1.11 pm

Dr. Godman: I shall be brief. I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie). As someone from a fishing family, I am very grateful to him for the Bill. Any measure that improves the safety of fishermen as they go about their most hazardous occupation must be welcomed by everyone. I never want to read again of men dying despite the fact that they have reached the relative sanctuary of an inflatable liferaft. That is what happened to Harry Eddom's two comrades. I never want to hear again of men going over the side, as those French fishermen did from the Snekkar Arctic, without protective suits, and perishing while their comrades who wore such suits survived.

I am very pleased with the way in which the Bill has been debated. It deserves every success. I look forward to the day when, in addition to the commendable changes made by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan, fishing vessels will carry immersion suits for their crews.

1.12 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I enthusiastically join in congratulating the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) on his Bill. It represents a very real achievement. I hope that it will become known as the McQuarrie Bill, as it is an important measure and the effort

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

that he has put into it and the fact that he introduced it in the first place warrant the attachment of his name to it. I can testify to what an ordeal it is to promote a private Member's Bill. The hon. Member concerned has to be a Government Department holding consultations, a publicist, and a public relations officer, and he has to use his own wit as well. It is an enormous job for the average Back Bencher.

The Bill is important. Most of those hon. Members present have fishing interests or fishing constituencies that have tragic roll calls. At the harvest of the sea service in Grimsby there used to be a roll call of those who had died in the fishing industry during the preceding year. There were always between a half dozen and a dozen names, and sometimes more. The figures now are not quite as horrifying as when we fished in Icelandic waters. Then, the loss of a vessel meant an enormous roll call. Nowadays there is a steady toll of one or two, but that toll is still high.

The shrinking of the industry has not brought down the death toll proportionately, perhaps because the industry is facing difficult financial times and corners are being cut, or perhaps because small vessels are used these days. Safety has not improved as it should have done.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan should be congratulated also because fishing is never given adequate attention. That is partly because hon. Members representing fishing constituencies are few. We do not form a strong caucus, but we try to put across the needs and demands of fishing. It has become the poor relation of agriculture.

A private Member's Bill was probably the only way to succeed in tackling the problem. I am glad that the hon. Member devoted his opportunity to this measure. His Bill provides for a safer existence for fishermen. Fishing will never be absolutely safe. It will never be the same as working on land, but the Bill provides for a safer existence for many hundreds of my constituents who still fish in distant and in not-so-distant waters. There can be no greater achievement in the House than that.

1.16 pm

Mr. Randall: I have one small regret about the Bill. In Committee I asked the Minister about the exploitation of fishermen by Spanish fishing vessels. The Minister mentioned that briefly today and I received a letter from him, but I have not had time to table an amendment or to react in any other way.

In Committee I explained how many redundant fishermen have gone to sea on Spanish vessels which, by exploiting the flag of convenience, are on the United Kingdom register. Some of my constituents have gone to sea in vessels which do not have lavatories, safety equipment, liferafts, food or wet weather equipment. The vessels are infested with cockroaches. Men have gone to sea and come back after 10 days owing the company £2 or £3 because of excessive charges for wet weather gear and other equipment. That is terrible exploitation.

I raised the matter with the Department of Transport two years ago and at the end of the Committee proceedings I asked the Minister to look into that exploitation. In his letter the Minister tells me that his officials are now doing that. They are considering with the industry's representatives whether something can be done or whether an EEC initiative is possible.

Safety at sea is at stake. I hope that the Minister will pursue the matter and ensure that if such vessels do not come in for surveys they will be struck off the list and that if they dodge the regulations by landing catches in Cork, so avoiding the system, he will take action.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) on a magnificent job. Steering a Bill through the House of Commons is difficult. It is a task that takes a lot of time and effort. I believe that people in the industry will be grateful for many years to come. The Bill will save lives. It will ensure that families are not deprived of their breadwinner. It will mean that there will not be so many widows, or children without fathers. Although it is not an overwhelming step forward it is a crucial and important step which will improve the safety and wellbeing of those who work in a hazardous industry.

1.20 pm

Mr. David Mitchell: I am happy to join those who have wished the Bill a successful and rapid passage on to the statute book. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) referred to Spanish vessels and the United Kingdom flag. If he reads the *Hansard* report of what I said earlier today, he will find a satisfactory explanation on how we intend to proceed.

I wish to clarify a matter which was raised in Committee, and that is the cost of emergency position indicating radio beacons—more usually called EPIRBs —which transmit on 406 MHz. We were asked what they were likely to cost when they came on the market. A figure of £2,000 was mentioned, compared with the £800 or so that I had been informed was the expected price. Accordingly, I arranged for the four companies which may manufacture the equipment to be contacted again to ascertain the latest position on cost. I am told that £850 is the target price for 406 megahertz EPIRBs. So there is no misunderstanding, I should add that the expression "target price" is carefully chosen. The manufacturers have yet to cost fully what the selling price will be. Therefore, I am advised that the words "estimated price" should be avoided in that context at this stage.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Will the Minister clarify a point? I should have raised it earlier. Arising from those cost estimates, what will be the transitional period during which people who have installed the 121 MHz equipment will be allowed to continue operating it before being asked to instal the 406 MHz equipment? The matter is causing some concern in the industry, particularly on cost grounds.

Mr. David Mitchell: If the hon. Gentleman cares to table a question on that, I shall give him an answer which will be in a public form.

The life and work of a fisherman involve risk and danger. The sea can change swiftly from the joy of seaside bathing weather to a cruel and deadly menace. We enjoy the fish brought by those who take those risks and, as we eat the harvest of the sea, we rarely give a moment's thought to those who were involved in catching it. We must recognise the inevitable risks involved in that occupation. All hon. Members, as representatives of the consumer, owe a debt to fishermen.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), through his initiative and determination, has given us an opportunity to help make the role of fishermen

slightly less dangerous. The House, the fishing industry and the Government have every reason to be grateful to my hon. Friend.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Civil Protection in Peacetime Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 1

PRELIMINARY

1.23 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 21, at end insert—

'"train" and "training" shall include the holding of exercises for members of local authority staffs and persons undertaking to serve as volunteers for the purpose of improving the preparedness of those persons to carry out any plans made under subsection 2 of section 2 of this Act.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 2, in clause 2, in page 2, line 15, leave out

'perform that function so as to allow'

and insert

', having regard to the subject matter of those plans, make, keep under review and revise plans'.

No. 4, in clause, in page 2, line 20, at end insert—

'(3) —A local authority may

(a) train

(b) arrange for the training of, and

(c) arrange for the attendance at any training course of suitable members of their own staff (and in the case of a county council, a fire and civil defence authority or in Scotland a regional counil the staff of any district council, London borough or the City of London in their area) for the purpose of carrying out any plans made under subsection (2) above.

(4) A local authority may

(a) train

(b) arrange for the training of, and

(c) Arrange for the attendance at any training course of any suitable person who undertakes to serve otherwise than for payment as a volunteer any suitable person who undertakes to serve otherwise then for payment as a volunteer with a view to assisting that authority in the carrying out of any plan made under sub-section (2) above.

(5) A local authority may, in relation to any plan made under subsection (2) above, at any time.

(a) take such preparatory steps as may be necessary to ensure that those plans can be carried out;

(b) carry out any of those plans for the purpose of averting, alleviating or eradicating the effects of any such emergency or disaster.'.

Mr. Corbett: With a little more foresight and a lot more generosity, we should have tabled amendments to protect the Government from fallout from last night's council elections and by-elections. We are, of course, too late for that now.

Amendments Nos. 1 and 4 concern training and implementation powers which are missing from the Bill. The Bill extends the planning functions of the GLAF regulations to civil protection, but does not seem to permit proper and systematic training of either staff or volunteers for this purpose. That would appear to leave a large hole in the Bill's provisions.

I understand that, in practice, fire and civil defence authorities would lack a power to train, and the shire counties and Scottish regions would have to use powers under section 138 of the Local Government Act 1972. That must be unsatisfactory. Councils have no powers to spend money on training to cope with civil protection, and the shires and the Scots can do so only by an addition to the

[Mr. Corbett]

rates bill. It is not an exaggeration to say that the effect in practice will be to inhibit or prevent proper training. The Bill's provisions will simply be ignored as other spending priorities in the shires and in Scotland compete and, I regret to say, inevitably win.

I do not believe that this choice should have to be made. I do not doubt that that was not the intention of the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor). All those who are concerned with training for coping with civil emergencies should be on the same footing with respect to financing those responsbilities under the Bill.

The need for this is dramatically underlined by the Chernobyl disaster. The hesitation, confusion and, I regret to say, secrecy apparent in the Government's response have been bad enough in the context of a nuclear disaster 2,000 miles from our shores, but imagine how much more serious it would have been had the wind been in a different directon or had an accident occurred, not 2,000 miles away on the other side of Europe, but at a coastal nuclear power station 20 milies away on the coast of France.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): Or in Britain.

Mr. Corbett: Yes.

The hon. Member for Upminster referred in Committee to the possibility of an accident at a French reactor. With a stronger wind coming in a different direction, the radiation fallout from Chernobyl would have been much more serious. It would have been even more serious if the disaster had occurred 20 miles away across the Channel or on the United Kingdom mainland.

The amendments are designed to ensure that training of staff volunteers in planning and carrying out measures to cope with peacetime civil emergencies can and does take place. The basis of the funding of those important activities should, as far as possible, be on the same footing.

Amendment No. 2 aims to ensure that the plans and procedures are not simply made, shelved and forgotten but are kept under review and revised on a regular systematic basis to meet changed needs. I shall give an example from my constituency. A new M6 relief road is to be built north of Birmingham to tempt traffic away from the crumbling elevated sections of the M6 between junction 5 via spaghetti junction and junction 7, which is north. The building of that new road and the diversion of the north-bound traffic will make it necessary for those concerned with these matters in the west midlands who revise whatever plans now exist to deal with serious accidents —it is put no higher than that—near spaghetti junction and with the particular problems that arise in dealing with accidents on that elevated section.

There is a need also for constant revision, review and updating of these plans. For example, planting a toxic waste disposal plant for a factory using toxic or dangerous chemicals or gases will clearly alter the needs. It is a right and a duty of councils and the fire and civil defence authorities quickly and properly to respond to those changed circumstances.

The Bill needs to give clear and specific guidance and to lay down a duty to ensure as far as possible that the training of staff and volunteers takes place and that the plans are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that they are the best that can be put in place. That is the purpose of the amendments. Perhaps I can give the Minister an illustration. I hope that when the impact of the dreadful events at Chernobyl has ended for the United Kingdom, the Government will review how they coped with the problem, what worked, what went wrong and why, and what changes and improvements need to be made at national and local level to cope with any future emergencies. I hope that the Government can be persuaded to publish the results of that review so that we in the House and those outside who are understandably concerned and alarmed about these matters can join in the debate and try to get reassurance from it.

1.30 pm

It is no exaggeration to say that thousands, if not millions, of people are at least puzzled and perplexed about what has been happening in the wake of the dreadful disaster in the Soviet Union. A woman who is coming to my surgery tonight told me that since news of the disaster became available 12 days ago neither she nor her children have been outside their home and the children have been kept away from school.

It is all very well for people to say that there is no need to stay indoors because of what has been said by the National Radiological Protection Board and others. However, I mention that because we need publicly to learn all the lessons we can from this incident to ensure that we have the best defences in place when we need them.

We are very good—or, more accurately, bad—at muddling though and then trying to get the defences in place after the event. However, when dealing with dangerous materials such as nuclear waste, nuclear reactors, toxic chemicals and toxic gas we have to do our best to ensure that the plans, preparation and training are in place and that they are as sharp, refined and updated as we can make them. Only in that way can we properly reassure those we represent that we understand their concerns and that we are doing our best to ensure that they are recognised and met.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): Perhaps it will be for the convenience of the House if I comment on some of the specific points raised. The amendment is similar to that tabled and discussed in Committee, although I recognise that there is a slight difference in the wording.

I want to refer briefly to Chernobyl. Obviously, that is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, but I take note of the comment of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) about a report and statement. That seems to be a reasonable request and I shall pass it on to my right hon. Friend.

The accident at Chernobyl should give added force to our thoughts about the circumstances in which civil defence resources can play an important part. However, happily in relation to the United Kingdom's position to date, that has not been necessary. The accident was certainly an unavoidable reminder, if any were needed, of the dangers that radioactivity can pose. It also gives added weight to the Bill. Clearly, in the arrangements that we seek to make here there is an interconnection between the civil defence needs for military purposes and the very important use that can be made of the establishments, training and facilities in relation to peacetime needs.

There are some difficulties about the amendments. I should like to make the position clear. In Committee, we discussed an amendment in relation to section 138 powers

and that is beyond the scope of the Bill. However, I must emphasise again that it would be open to a local authority making civil defence plans to take account of the possible use of civil defence resources in peacetime emergencies, to record and maintain their plans with whatever degree of separation they wish and, if convenient, to collect whatever elements of the plan relate to peacetime emergencies and hold them separately. That would be in order.

The hon. Gentleman's point concerned the interconnection of the training costs and planning in relation to grant. The Bill makes it clear that for the payment of civil defence grant there must be a connection between the two and a similarity in civil emergency planning that can usefully be tackled in conjunction with the wartime emergency planning required under the Civil Defence Act 1948, and for which new regulations have been issued.

It is not intended that authorities should divert their civil defence staffs away from civil defence and concentrate on the preparation of plans to deal solely with peacetime emergencies. There is a clear danger that the amendment would encourage that. As I said in Committee, it is fundamental to the all-hazard approach that we attempt to fuse those two objectives in such a way that civil defence funds can legitimately be made available for peacetime training.

Amendment No. 2 presents particular difficulties. It is not enough to say that local authorities should plan for a possible emergency. I think that the hon. Gentleman's intention was that they should plan to take action to avert, alleviate or remove the potential effects of an emergency, and that is spelt out in clause 2(1). The whole power would be rather nebulous, and the amendment is rather awkward in what it tries to cover.

Amendment No. 4 seeks to enable local authorities to have trained staff and volunteers who would be involved in carrying out plans made under clause 2(2). Quite frankly, the amendment would add little to their powers. There are specific provisions in the Civil Defence Regulations 1983 that relate to civil defence, and the amendment would add nothing to civil defence plans.

If the aim is to make expenditure on such training eligible for civil defence grant, I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that that would not be possible because separate peacetime planning and any related training are not and cannot be civil defence functions. However, if they are related to wartime use, clearly they would become eligible for grant.

I must stress again the difficulty about separation. I understand the hon. Gentleman's intention in trying to create that separation, but this Bill amends the 1948 Act, and in relation to the clarification of where grant may be spent we must proceed in the prescribed manner. Indeed, we agreed in Committee that it would be sensible to proceed along that route.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Has the Minister any estimate of the possible cost in which the Government could be involved if local authorities were able to go ahead and train for civil accidents and disasters not connected with wartime planning, and attract grant for that? The Minister seems to suggest that this is an economic argument.

Mr. Shaw: It is not really an economic argument. We are saying that the civil defence grant made available within our total budget—which, off the cuff, I think is £8 million—that has been used for training purposes still has a little way to go before it is fully taken up. I am not making an economic argument, but clarifying the point that the intention of the Bill is to allow training establishments to serve both purposes so that the civil defence grant can be made available to serve both purposes, but not peacetime arrangements alone.

Mr. Corbett: I do not suggest that what the Minister has said about finance is an open invitation to what has become known as creative accounting. However, can he give the House an assurance that there will be a sensitive understanding of the need for flexibility? I understand his point about duality, but I want him to assure us that there will be some sensitivity about flexibility while meeting the point that he has urged on the House.

Mr. Shaw: I give the House that assurance. As I said in Committee, although at the moment the grant aid in the civil defence budget is marginally underspent, I would expect that, through the arrangements in the Bill and the regulations set out in 1983, local authorities would be encouraged to spend more on the establishment of correctly designed training schemes, appointments and capital expenditure. If that were so, I would wish to review the total amount of grant aid available.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I endorse what my hon. Friend the Minister of State has said about the amendment, and I have very little to add to it. However, it is worth commenting that the Chernobyl disaster, to which the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) referred, illustrates very well the close link between civil defence and peacetime planning in the dangerous world in which we now live. Since Second Reading, the emphasis on the way in which the training for both those eventualities should be done at the same time has been clarified. Radiation fallout is one of the peacetime risks for which we now have to prepare ourselves, so that strengthens rather than weakens the Government's case that it is important that the close link between civil defence and peacetime planning be maintained. It makes it easier for us to accept that, in doing so, we are making adequate preparation for the peacetime planning of rescue operations.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State and his Department will have to look closely, in the light of what has happened at Chernobyl, at how much more this country has to prepare itself for radiation fallout disasters in peace and war. The Bill, which is modest in its scope, will have a great role to play in ecouraging the expansion of Government policy along those lines.

I am glad to say that there has been little sign of opposition to the Bill's passage through the House, with great assistance from Opposition Members, but it is a little ironic that among those who have opposed the Bill is the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In an article written before Chernobyl, the CND, explaining why it was so opposed to the Bill, said:

> "The main reasons why nuclear-free zones have to be worried about the passage of the Bill is that it legitimises the Government's new all-hazards approach to emergency planning, which aims to cloud over the clear distinction between preparing plans for civil contingencies and those for a nuclear attack."

The events since that article was written must demonstrate, even to those who wrote the article, that, far

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

from there being a clear distinction between the necessary civil preparation for disaster and for nuclear attack, there are great similarities in that area.

I add, on a wider note, that had the Air India aeroplane, which exploded off the Irish coast, been on time, that explosion would have occurred right over the heart of London. Had that happened, the consequences of a jumbo jet crashing in the middle of our crowded streets would have been horrific. The planning that can now be done and the use of the volunteer services, which I hope will shortly be there, to deal with both wartime and peacetime emergencies, will now be greatly strengthened so that, should any such horrific disaster occur, we will, for the first time, have a proper organisation to deal with it.

Therefore, I hope that the House will resist the amendments and allow the Bill to go forward for Third Reading.

Mr. Tony Banks: I was disappointed that the Minister could not accept the amendments, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said, are intended to be helpful. I am sure that the Minister accepted that.

Unfortunately, I did not receive clear reasons, other than economic reasons, why the Minister was not prepared to accept the amendments. I concede that there has to be a connection between wartime and peacetime planning. I apologise to the Minister if I have misinterpreted his views, but he seemed to be saying that it is all right to have a spin-off into peacetime planning provided that it is essentially wartime planning. However, he did not seem to want to accept the connection in the other direction: that if local authorities were involved in exclusively peacetime planning, there would be a spin-off into wartime planning.

Conservative Members must understand that there is much sensitivity among Labour-controlled local authorities towards what is seen as essential wartime emergency planning. No rational or sane local authority —that means no authority that I can think of—would resist the idea of making proper plans for peacetime emergencies, and we have heard several examples of such emergencies today.

1.45 pm

We may be accused of being alarmist and over-dramatic if we talk about possible emergencies. We heard an account of what would have happened had the prevailing winds been different following the Chernobyl disaster. The hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) mentioned the Air India disaster. That is a serious problem for London, and I am exclusively interested in London on this occasion, as on other occasions. Given the passage of heavy jets over London, the law of averages suggests that sooner or later, regrettably and tragically, one of them is likely to crash in central London. A couple of years ago, *The London Standard* described a possible scenario of a jumbo jet crashing on Victoria station. That was horrific. We are more likely to face that sort of disaster than all-out nuclear war, as Labour-controlled local authorities are acutely aware. That is why they would like to become involved in peacetime emergency planning disconnected from wartime planning and obtain the necessary grants from the Government to train staff and volunteers to cope with such tragic events.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The hon. Gentleman's point clearly illustrates why the Government and I must resist the amendment. We cannot allow a civil defence grant, which is specifically intended for civil defence purposes, to be entirely diverted from civil defence use into other worthy causes, such as entirely peacetime activities, which should be properly funded from other sources.

Mr. Banks: We have returned to the original point. Conservative Members seem to accept that, provided that the planning is essential to anticipate wartime emergencies, the benefit for peacetime planning is all right. But to get the benefit for the peacetime planning, we must accept the wartime planning element; politically, many Labour local authorities are not prepared to do that.

The Minister must accept that there is a connection in the other direction. If Labour-controlled authorities are involved in training staff for peacetime emergencies, as there are similarities between some peacetime and wartime emergencies, the Government receive the benefit of planning by the back door. But that would at least allow Labour-controlled authorities that do not accept that there is any legitimate defence against nuclear war to take proper steps to protect their populations from the tragedies that are likely in a modern world.

I shall not recount a long list of likely disasters that might afflict us in London. However, I am worried about the passage through my constituency of nuclear waste from the Central Electricity Generating Board. There have been several alerts in the borough of Newham, especially in Stratford in my constituency. On a personal note, an alert occurred not more than half a mile from where I live, so I have a personal interest in the matter. The fire brigade and emergency services were called out because it was believed that one flask was leaking. On both occasions, it turned out that it was not a radioactive leak but rain water, or so we were told.

I was not assured by the explanation when I asked the Secretary of State what had happened, that it was rain water, for the simple reason that somebody must have thought it was worth the emergency services turning up because there might have been a leak. If somebody had said, when he got the emergency call, that there was no point in turning up because the flask was clearly indestructible and could not have leaked, that would have been thought an irresponsible reaction.

When nuclear waste is transported through one's constituency, almost through one's back yard, one feels that it should be planned and that the local authority should be involved in the planning for a potential disaster. I do not know to what extent the London borough of Newham is equipped to deal with the passage of nuclear waste through its area. I should like to think that, under the terms of this amendment, the council would be able to put plans to central Government and get the funds that we need to train the staff.

Mr. Corbett: Can my hon. Friend confirm that local authorities generally find it difficult, if not impossible, to get information about the movement by rail of nuclear waste, and that that waste goes to a plant, now called Sellafield, which is not open for international inspection?

Mr. Banks: Local authorities are not so informed. That is why the need for training is so vital. I assume that local authorities are not told because of the secrecy involved. The Government may say that if they inform local

authorities, the news might leak out, there might be a terrorist attack on the train, and we would get the disaster that we have all been desperately trying to avoid. I understand the Government's difficulty in such situations. They have to balance the interests of security with the interests of providing information, but we think that they often fall down badly when providing the necessary information.

My hon. Friend the Member for Erdington mentioned Sellafield, which reminds me of a rather amusing cartoon on the front page of *The Guardian*. Apparently, the Russians had got in touch with the British Government to ask for advice about dealing with the Chernobyl disaster and the reply was, "Change the name."

We do not get the information that we require about the passage of nuclear waste. If local authorities were given more information, even in the absence of funds from central Government, which the amendment would allow us to get, certain minimal protection could be afforded and planning steps could be taken to deal with the problem.

I regret that the Government have not seen fit to accept the amendment. It seems that in these days, when local authorities are being heavily penalised by rate support grant cuts and Government penalties on expenditure, it is almost impossible for local authorities to go in for the peacetime planning that they would want to undertake because of the absence of funds.

Last night, we had a magnificent result in the London borough of Newham. The council now consists of 60 Labour members with no Tories or alliance members. Newham is now a Tory and alliance-free zone. We should like to put up posters around the borough to that effect, but we do not have the funds. Unless the Government are prepared to accept the amendment and give us the money that is needed, neither my borough nor any other will be able to undertake peacetime planning, which is in the interests of people in my borough and throughout the country.

Mr. Corbett: I regret that the Minister cannot meet our points, although he has given us a slice off the end of the loaf. However, it may be for the convenience of the House if I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.

1.55 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We have discussed the Bill fairly comprehensively and I do not propose to do so again. I am aware that my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) has a valuable Bill to be taken after this one, and it is important that that should not run out of time on account of my being long-winded.

If Newham, North-West is now a Tory and alliance-free zone that will be at least as much in the constituency's interest as if it were a nuclear-free zone. I hope that the consequences will not be disastrous in either event and that both will be remedied in due course.

As I have said, the need for the Bill is clear in the light of recent events. The House will not need to look any closer at that in order to give the Bill its Third Reading.

I shou'd like to thank all those who have assisted in the Bill's passage so far, particularly my hon. Friend the Minister of State and his staff at the Home Office, whose assistance has been invaluable to me. I should also like to thank the sponsors of the Bill of all parties, most particularly the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and his colleague the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), both of whom have given me great assistance and whose interventions and attempted amendments have almost without exception been designed to strengthen rather than weaken the Bill.

This is one of those almost unique occasions on which the House can unite in agreeing with the need for a Bill. I look forward in hope to seeing the Bill received in the other place and returning here without further difficulty.

1.58 pm

Mr. Mikardo: Like the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) I am anxious that not only this Bill but that of the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) have a successful passage within the next half hour or so and I shall be brief.

However, I am bound to say something as a matter of principle. I have one hesitation about the Bill. Its heart is in the right place. Its motives are good. It seeks to relieve the ill-effects of civil disasters. Nobody could complain about that.

In so far as there are civil defence organisations in Britain, and in so far as they can contribute to supplementing the work of emergency services — the police, the fire brigade and the National Health Service —and add something to the effectiveness of their work in dealing with civil disasters, every one of us would want it to have a fair wind.

I am bound to say, however—my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will join me in this if no one else will—that I have one niggle about the Bill. It gives a fig leaf of civil respectability to the nakedness of the notion that there is such a thing as civil defence against nuclear attack in war.

I shall not malign the hon. Member for Upminster by suggesting that that was any part of his motivation in introducing the Bill, but I am sure that some people will use the Bill to suggest that those who take the view that there is no civil defence against nuclear attack and, therefore, that we should not be devoting resources to what is a figment of a heated imagination, are somehow unwilling to make a full contribution to the relief of civil defence.

I notice that on Second Reading even the hon. Members for Upminster and for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), perhaps inadvertently, said things which support my thesis. In reply to an intervention about the possibility of a discharge from Sellafield, the hon. Member for Upminster said:

"We have no adequate preparation to deal with a massive escape of radioactivity".—[*Official Report*, 21 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 592.]

If that is true of an escape of raidoactivity from a civil installation, it is a thousand times true of radioactivity resulting from nuclear attack. The hon. Member for Upminster has been tremendously honest. He reminded us that it took three months to clear up after the disaster at Flixborough.

Recalling the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the hon. Member for Dumfries said:

"I accept that civil defence could do very little to mitigate that kind of disaster."—[*Official Report*, 21 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 595.]

[Mr. Mikardo]

Hiroshima and Nagasaki were vicarage tea parties compared with what would be the consequences of an attack made with today's much larger and more horrendous weapons.

In so far as there are some institutions which could help the emergency services, I support the Bill. The big giveaway came from the Minister when he said that we can give money to one thing but not to another. It does not matter whether a child is killed because an enemy drops a nuclear bomb on us or because a tip slides down a mountainside at Aberfan. I do not understand the Minister's logic. It seems distorted and disgraceful logic and illustrates my argument about the pretence of civil defence.

Despite those reservations, I join those who welcome the Bill. I congratulate the hon. Member for Upminister on getting to Third Reading, and I wish him well when he takes it to another and sometimes stormy place.

2.3 pm

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) congratulate my on. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor). I also congratulate my hon. Friend. He has given retrospective credibility and exactitude to an argument that I have long used.

One of my arguments in favour of civil defence has been that it would enable us to deal with non-military disasters. With great acumen, and perhaps by probing Government Departments, my hon. Friend has found that, without legislation, facilities intended for civil defence would not be fully available to cope with non-military disasters.

His Bill will no doubt be known throughout time as the Bonsor Bill—it is always fun to get on the statute book legislation which bears one's name—and it repairs a fault.

I shall not detain the House for long as I am aware that it wishes to give its attention to other business. The Bill is commonsense in its approach. It will enable, without undue difficulty, the forces that are available for dealing with military warlike disasters to be used in a civil context. I shall not pursue the broader theme that was raised by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar. The reason for civil defence is to give credibility to the deterrent posture that we adopt, and that posture has now been properly tied in with civil emergency provisions. We should all be grateful to my hon. Friend for having tidied up our legislation in a commonsense way. From time to time the House deals with pure and unadulterated common sense and it is in that way that my hon. Friend's Bill can most appropriately be described. I congratulate him on what I anticipate will before long be the passage on to the statute book of the Bonsor Bill.

2.6 pm

Mr. Corbett: I join in congratulating the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) on what I hope will be the Bill's Third Reading. I wish it all success in another place, despite the reservations which I know he understands the Opposition have and which have been spelt out by my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo).

Having been privileged in succeeding to get a private Member's Bill on the statute book, I regret very much that when such Bills are published the promoters' names disappear from their face. That means that one relies on the memory of friends and colleagues in this place.

I welcome the way in which the Minister responded to my suggestion that there should be a full report on the way in which the Government have responded to the impact on the United Kingdom of the Chernobyl disaster. He will recall that six or seven days after we learnt of the terrible accident, the Department of the Environment opened an incident room. The telephone number of that room was given by the BBC's "World at One". A call was made and the response was, "We are just having a cup of tea." It turned out to be a room where drivers were assembled. It was reported in *The Guardian* that when another telephone number was given a terrified young woman answered the phone and said that she knew nothing about gamma rays. Another caller spoke to someone on the switchboard and was then shunted all round the houses and ended up, according to *The Guardian,* being put through to a 14-year-old ex-directory number.

The more serious point is that many of the telephone callers to the latest of the incident rooms at the Department of Energy—one might have thought it should have been involved rather earlier—asked specific questions about radiation levels. I am told that these callers have been referred to yet another incident room at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, where soothing noises are made but no figures are given. The Ministry monitors daily radiation levels in milk, water, green vegetables and pasture land, for example, but it publishes no figures. I hope that the Minister will see the sense of making figures available to back up the reassurances that are being given on behalf of the Government. Some fairly basic statistical evidence should be given to demonstrate what spokesmen and spokeswomen are saying, whichis that radiation levels are falling. We should have the figures for the past seven or 10 days.

Finally, I congratulate the hon. Member for Upminster on taking the Bill this far.

2.9 pm

Mr. Giles Shaw: The words used by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) seem to me entirely apposite. The Bill is a small commonsense measure. It amends the 1948 Act, and the way that that Act is rooted in civil defence made it so difficult to accept the amendments moved by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), which would have widened the scope of the Bill.

It is a modest measure which will remedy a clear wrong, which is that expenditures that can be used jointly for peace as well as wartime protection are not subject to a provision that grant should be paid. That wrong has been put right and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir M. Bonsor) on doing it in this way and on taking the Bill through Committee and the various stages on the Floor of the House.

I wish the Bill speedy progress to the statute book through the other place. I trust that the House will give it a Third Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Consumer Safety (Amendment) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 2

POWERS OF COMMISSIONERS TO DETAIN GOODS

2.10 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 4, leave out subsection (1) and insert——

'(1) A customs officer may, for the purpose of facilitating the exercise by any enforcement authority or officer of such an authority of any functions conferred on the authority or officer by or under the safety legislation, seize any imported goods and detain them for not more than forty-eight hours.

(1A) Anything seized and detained under this section shall be dealt with during the period of its detention in such manner as the Commissioners of Customs and Excise may direct.'.

As drafted, clause 2 would enable Customs officers to detain any goods for up to 72 hours. The amendment limits the maximum detention period to 48 hours, makes one or two minor technical changes and removes a technical inconsistency in the Bill, as reported.

Subsection (2) now includes a definition of "Customs officer" although there is no reference to that term in the clause or elsewhere in the Bill. The amendment rectifies that by introducing a reference to "Customs officer" in the new subsection (1). It also makes it clear that goods detained under that clause shall be dealt with

"in such manner as the Commissioners of Customs and Excise may direct."

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I am sorry that the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) should have felt it necessary, under gentle persuasion from the Government Front Bench, to move this amendment. I do not want to go over the ground that we covered in Committee, although I suspect that I shall do so.

The Committee rejected a similar amendment on two separate occasions. Indeed, I suspect that the second vote was inadvertent rather than a commitment to the Government's case. Consequently, it is remarkable that the sponsor of the Bill should have to accept an unnecessary watering down of it. But behind the Minister's charming smile and smooth tones was the iron threat:

"If that disagreement is not resolved during our debate, my hon. Friend's ambition to put the legislation on the statute book during the present Session may be in peril." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee C;* 30 April 1986, c. 5.]

Thus the Minister said that for a mere extra 24 hours he was willing to consider wrecking a Bill that is accepted and welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, with the exception apparently of some members of the Government.

Some rather peculiar arguments were adduced in support of the Government's case that the time should be limited to 48 hours, not 72 hours. My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) will find it incredible that our suggestion of 72 hours to inquire into teddy bears and imported dolls was rejected by the Minister on the ground that all those potentially unsafe toys would pile up at Britain's ports and so prevent our normal trade. It was a preposterous proposition, although he had the good grace to look shame-faced even if he did not sound it.

The Minister then decided that bigger guns were needed, and he called in aid the treaty of Rome, Brussels, the Commission and the whole paraphernalia of the Common Market against that extra 24 hours of inspection. We were told that giving an extra 24 hours would put us in breach of the rules. The Minister could not tell us why that was so, because he had not asked anyone. He admitted that there had been no consultation, and he did not know whether his own figure of 48 hours would be acceptable.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Poplar and Bow): Is my right hon. Friend or the Minister aware of what the French get up to by delaying things at ports when it suits them? They operate what is virtually a non-tariff barrier to imports. In one case everthing has to be routed through a little customs post in Poitiers and a long backlog builds up. In another case it is demanded that a container should not contain a mixed load, so every container has to be opened. It is nonsense to suggest that we should be inhibited by Common Market rules.

Mr. Williams: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who was not able to follow the discussion in Committee. That is why I draw his attention to some of the peculiarities in the arguments. We told the Minister that if he happened to be in France, far from quivering at the prospect of being arraigned before the European Court, he would be donning his best suit to be presented with the Croix de Guerre and some kisses for having found yet another way of restraining trade from outside France. However, the Minister does not want heroism; all he wants is to capitulate to the commercial interests lobbying his Department.

The Minister said that the first two days were needed only to inspect papers. We never got to the bottom of the matter. He said that there would be no investigation, and he added that the preliminary inquiry would include

"the identity of the importer, the likely destination of the goods and preliminary checks on any documentation, test certificates and so on."

That, apparently, is not an investigation in the Minister's parlance. The Minister said that it might be necessary for enforcement authorities

"to make a telegraphic check on information from an exporter in a different continent or where weekends or public holidays make it especially difficult to obtain information quickly."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C,* 30 April 1986; c. 12.]

We told him that weekends last for 48 hours and that 48 hours was all that the amendment allowed. We also said that, because of the time zones, another 12 hours had to be added because offices in other parts of the world might not be open. We argued that a gap of 60 hours was needed to have a reasonable chance of making contact. The Minister was unimpressed and unpersuaded.

The hon. Member for York is hiding his bruises. I understand that his arm was twisted. I am sorry that he submitted to intellectual torture, because the Bill is good and the 72 hours provision stood in its own right. As it is not our wish to do anything to delay the Bill's progress, but merely to highlight the sordid manoeuvring behind the scenes to diminish and dilute what started as a good Bill, until the Minister got his paws on it, I thought it worth enlightening my hon. Friends about how devious the Government have been.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): I am

[Mr. Michael Howard]

grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) for moving this amendment, which corrects a technical inconsistency in the Bill as reported and, more importantly, reduces the maximum period of detention by Customs and Excise from 72 to 48 hours.

This is a relatively minor change but one which, in my view, is very important to reduce the risk of successful challenge to the Bill under article 30 of the treaty of Rome. This article prohibits measures which have the effect of restricting imports, and although article 36 of the treaty permits exceptions to this rule on the grounds of health and safety, any measures taken on those grounds must be strictly proportionate to the health and safety risk in question.

The Customs detention provision is not intended to be sufficient to enable enforcement authorities to subject goods to detailed scientific tests, but merely to allow them to make preliminary inquiries about imports, to arrive on the scene and, if appropriate, to exercise their own powers to seize or suspend the goods.

I had initially thought that 24 hours was sufficient—and, therefore, that a longer period would be disproportionate—for this limited purpose, but I have been persuaded by the strong arguments of my hon. Friend and of the National Consumer Council and local authority associations that up to 48 hours might be necessary to deal with the awkward cases. I am not persuaded that there is any case for increasing the period to 72 hours, which would run a great risk of being disproportionate to the purpose that it is intended to achieve. Therefore, I urge the House, in the interests of safeguarding the measure as a whole from successful challenge in the European Court, to accept the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Order for Third Reading read.

2.20 pm

Mr. Gregory: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This Bill is the product of my keen interest in protecting consumers from the consequences of dangerous and unsafe products as well as of my being successful in the ballot for private Members' Bills.

I realise the complexity of such a Bill. It contains 17 clauses and two schedules. Injury, and indeed death, can result from unsafe products. That is why it is vital to bring forward proposals outlined in the White Paper on the safety of goods. Each year, about 7,000 people die in home accidents, which is a greater number than those killed on the roads. Furthermore, an estimated 3 million people sustain injuries which require medical attention. That toll in human suffering cannot be allowed to continue.

Dangerous consumer goods, especially items that have not been checked for safety, contribute substantially to those appalling figures. The tragic consequences can be devastating—the death in Hull from an imported Polish light bulb and the death before Christmas of a five-month-old child in Leeds from playing with a far eastern toy pony.

Understandably, the media have highlighted the aspect of toys covered by the Bill, but the scope in consumer terms is much wider. It embraces all areas for which there are existing consumer regulations, such as faulty electrical products, unstable pushchairs, children's nightwear and cosmetics.

I shall cite three examples of dangerous goods on sale. First, decorative table lamps containing tricholoethylene which has been banned since 1980, which caused the death of two young boys; secondly, steel splinters from imported hammers, which caused at least four people to lose their eyesight; and, thirdly, painted dolls which contain 120 times the legal limit of lead. This week, the BBC programme "That's Life" drew to my attention drinking mugs in the shape of dogs and birds which, it is understood, contain up to 20 times the permitted lead level. Those items were imported from Hong Kong.

The Bill implements important proposals in the White Paper of July 1984 on the safety of goods. I hope that in the autumn we shall hear an announcement in the Gracious Speech of a major consumer Bill which will cover the key element of a duty of safety, because that goes beyond the remit of a private Member's Bill.

Supported by the National Consumer Council, I have introduced a Bill which seeks to create new powers for enforcement authorities to act against unsafe goods at the United Kingdom factory gate and at the point of entry to this country. Instead of trading standards officers having to track down suspect goods at every conceivable retail point—an impossible task—they will be empowered to prohibit such goods getting into the wholesale trade.

Reputable traders will have nothing to fear, as they will have carried out safety checks before placing their orders. The Bill is aimed at catching the unscrupulous. That is why it has wide-ranging support from bodies such as the National Consumer Council, the National Federation of Consumer Groups, the British Standards Institution, the Confederation of British Industry, the Consumers' Association, the Welsh Consumer Council, the Scottish Consumer Council, the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, the Institute of Trading Standards Administration, the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the British Toy and Hobby Manufacturers Association.

In conjunction with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), we have all worked hard to produce a set of measures which, by promoting more effective enforcement of existing safety regulations without inadvertently punishing the innocent trader, will bring significant benefits to consumers and reputable businesses. There is provision for the payment of compensation in the unlikely event that goods which are suspended from supply turn out not to contravene safety regulations.

The Bill makes a timely and constructive contribution to consumer safety. It tackes an important problem in a realistic way. It is vital to protect life and limb. If the Bill becomes law during this Session, it will catch this year's Christmas trade.

2.24 pm

Mr. Mikardo: I am glad to see the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) looking so cheerful this morning after the Labour party captured control of York yesterday. That must be causing him much worry when thinking about his role in the next general election.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) said that the one changed provision was a result of arm twisting by the Minister, and so it was. The

first private Members' Bill debated last Friday was hijacked by the Government from the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters). The first private Members' Bill we considered this morning was hijacked by the Government from the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie). In nearly 40 years as a Member, I have never known any Government who behaved so badly to private Members and private Members' Bills. The Government escape their responsibility for introducing desirable legislation by letting private Members introduce Bills and then cutting them to ribbons and turning them into Government Bills. That did not happen as badly with this Bill as it did with the other two Bills to which I referred. Those two Bills were virtually completely different from the legislation to which the House gave a Second Reading. I hope that that undesirable practice will not continue much longer.

2.26 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend (Mr. Gregory) on introducing this excellent legislation. He drew No. 20 in the ballot for private Members' Bills, which was hardly favourable. However, he has done everyone a great service by introducing the Bill, which is particularly welcomed by my constituents in Basildon.

The House will remember the publicity that my hon. Friend gained before Christmas with respect to various products. If the Bill prevents just on fatal accident, it will be more than worthwhile. I extend my heartiest congratulations to my hon. Friend.

2.27 pm

Mr. Williams: I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory). As he is well aware, we welcome the Bill's intentions, I think that the hon. Gentleman would be gracious enough to acknowledge that the fact that it appears that the Bill will reach the statute book is due to the help he has received from Government and Opposition Back Benchers.

I should like to tell my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) that, unfortunately, the Bill's career does not differ from his description of other Bills. The Under-Secretary of State tabled on the Order Paper motions to delete 10 successive clauses from the Bill. The Bill is no substitute for legislation covering the general duty on safety of goods, which is what we wanted, but it is welcome as an interim measure.

The Under-Secretary of State said that the Bill had had to be diluted because the EEC said that the time taken for inspections had to be proportionate to the problem confronted. The hon. Member for York spoke of children facing maiming and possible loss of eyes or their lives. It is therefore ludicrous to suggest that the extra 24 hours — the hon. and learned Gentleman forced the hon. Member for York to delete that provision—would have made that much difference. We welcome the Bill, even in its weakened form.

2.28 pm

Mr. Howard: Like other hon. Members, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory), who does not seem to me to look like a hijacked person might be expected to look.

In response to the observations of the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) about yesterday's elections in York, may I say that the relationship between an amendment which was moved this morning and the vote in Committee shows that provisional votes do not always provide a sure guide to the eventual outcome.

The Government intend to introduce a general safety duty as soon as possible. I commend the Bill to the House and wish it godspeed on its way to the statute book.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, etc.) (Amendment) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on amendment proposed [25 April] on consideration of the Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee).

Which amendment was, in page 3, line 17, to leave out '18' and insert '16', instead thereof.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

2.29 pm

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): A fortnight ago I had just started to speak to this amendment when I was rudely interrupted by the ending of our proceedings. A week ago I endeavoured to continue that speech and again I was caught out by the Standing Orders. At that point——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Debate to be resumed what day? No day named.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH (UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 4 July.

RIGHT TO INTEREST BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 4 July.

Swale District General Hospital

2.30 pm

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): In recent weeks I have received more than 7,000 letters and submissions from individuals on the Isle of Sheppey. By any standards that is a heavy postbag. Indeed, the letters alone without the envelopes weight 22lb. Those letters have come to me because on the Isle of Sheppey, in my constituency of Faversham, and in the borough council of Swale, we face yet another threat, indeed a double threat, to our Sheppey general hospital.

The Medway health authority is planning to remove surgical facilities from Sheppey general hospital. That move has been opposed by virtually the whole local population. Many of them have opposed it and in writing it has now been formally opposed by the community health council. I mention that because I suspect that the matter will undoubtedly come before my hon. Friend the Minister and the Secretary of State for a final decision. At the same time, we are faced with yet another threat, the possible closure of the Sheppey general hospital maternity unit. That arises not out of any plan of the Medway health authority but from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, which is recommending the withdrawal of recognition of the training of junior doctors.

The people of Sheppey have fought long and hard to preserve their hospital. It is not a small cottage hospital but a 110-bed general hospital. Sheppey is a large community of some 40,000. It is an island linked to the mainland by a lifting bridge. Communication with the mainland is far more tenuous and difficult than most people in the south-east of England can begin to understand.

I make no apology for raising this issue again with the Minister. This is the fifth occasion in less than four years that I have stressed the need for us to maintain our local hospital facilities, at least until we have our new Swale district general hospital. In November 1982 I submitted a petition from 7,500 Sheppey people urging the maintenance of the general hospital until the new Swale hospital is completed. On 15 June 1984, I presented yet another petition signed by 6,500 people again urging that the maternity unit at the hospital and all existing facilities be maintained or improved until the proposed new Swale hospital is completed.

The Secretary of State's reply to that petition was very significant. On 12 July 1984 he gave me an assurance that there had been no decision to run down the maternity facilities. He stated that the authority did not envisage any change to present maternity facilities before 1990. On 20 January 1985 I had an Adjournment debate on resources for the Medway health district. Again, I stressed the need for our second district general hospital to be located in the borough of Swale. I stated then that the Medway strategy included a second district general hospital in the Swale area, and that there was an urgent need to commence planning so that building work could begin as soon as the capital finance was available. The key point is not that we expect money tomorrow, but that we expect some plans tomorrow.

In March 1985 I had yet another Adjournment debate, this time on the Sheppey maternity unit. I again stated that we must have our Swale district general hospital, but in

the meantime we had to ensure that our local hospital services were maintained and improved. That is the other part of the issue—if we cannot have our new district general hospital, we must have the Minister's and the Government's support in maintaining the widest possible range of medical services for this very large and often isolated community.

I stress that the proposed district general hospital has been part of the strategy plan for some time. The Medway health authority plan states that Swale hospital is still required and that it will be a long-term aim for the authority to develop in order to provide comprehensive hospital services for the population in the eastern part of the district. It also states that it is urgently necessary to build up the acute services of Sheppey hospital to provide the main eastern hospital base until Swale hospital can be afforded.

It is a tragedy, therefore, that the regional strategic plan for Medway says nothing whatsoever about the Swale hospital. The 10-year plan says nothing about the need for a second district general hospital. In that omission lies some of our frustration. It is fine to talk about these facilities for the long term, but to omit them from the next 10-year plan makes one wonder whether they will be included in the following 10-year plan, or whether we will ever see them at all.

It is clear that the South-East Thames hospital region does not envisage such a hospital this century. That is unacceptable to the whole of the population in our area. There is no planning in sight, there is no site acquisition in view, and, as far as we can judge, there is not even the prospect of a full option appraisal.

I stress that we are not necessarily talking about new and major additional expenditure. We are essentially talking about the replacement of old fabric and the possible replacement of four—in some cases very old—hospital facilities. It may be that the assets available would in many ways compensate substantially for any additional capital expenditure. It worries me greatly that as a society we cannot plan, at least within a decade or so, to develop in a businesslike manner facilities that, generally speaking, most of the people involved agree are necessary.

Medway is the most under-provided district in the south-east of England. It has only 70 per cent. of its resource allocation working party target. Against that, we know that the district is to receive major capital growth of more than £35 million for the expanded Medway district general hospital. That is a programme of which we can and should be proud. No one is naive enough to believe that we can suddenly conjure up additional unlimited resources for a second district general hospital in the immediate future. But what is unacceptable to the thousands of people who have written to me, to the community health council and to the local elected council is that we should continue to run down the services in the eastern part of the district until new facilities are built.

What we need from the Minister is an assurance that he will resist any proposals—and I suspect that they will be coming to him—to close surgical facilities, maternity facilities or casualty facilities. They are not under threat at the moment. We want to be sure that the Minister will support us locally in resisting the closure of any such services. It is clear that it is my hon. Friend who will decide these matters because it is virtually certain that the local council and the community health council will continue to resist the closures. They have a clear understanding of local hospital needs and are very much in touch with local feeling on these matters.

This is perhaps the most important point. Will my right hon. Friend the Minister raise with the region or Medway health district the possibility of bringing forward our planning for the new hospital? That is the key point. The hospital is part of our strategy. It must be an indictment of our system if we cannot get on with site acquisition and planning at the very least. We would warmly welcome a visit from my right hon. Friend. I promise him that it would be a friendly visit. A ministerial visit allows us to show how unusual the location of the Isle of Sheppey is, and how concerned local people are about the difficulties of communications to the mainland.

Recently, members of the community health council and the hospital watch committee demonstrated the difficulties facing people on Sheppey when travelling to the mainland, and just how impossible it will be if they are forced to travel even further for more of their hospital needs. For example, one of the propositions is that the day surgery should be transferred to Sittingbourne, which is a smaller hospital with fewer facilities than Sheppey. For that, one of the rules is that one has to be in hospital by 8 am. That is physically impossible by public transport from many parts of the Isle of Sheppey. Someone at Leysdown, at the eastern end of the island, would have to leave by 6.30 am, and still he would be late at Sittingbourne. It would be a difficult bus, train and then bus journey taking over two hours and costing nearly £5 for the return fare.

Travelling to the Medway hospital is worse. Again, the journey time would be well over two hours by bus, train and bus. The journey would be long and difficult. At one point there is just a four-minute transfer time from one train to another at Sittingbourne. That assumes that one is healthy enough to maintain a rigorous timetable and switch trains at quite a rate. But one would not be going to hospital if one was healthy. On a Sunday it would be literally impossible for residents to go by public transport to visit relatives in the hospital at Medway and get back again. The timings make it too difficult.

I do not believe that in trying to provide a caring Health Service and first-class medical facilities, which we are all striving to achieve, we are serving the community if we move the centres of excellence so far from the periphery that people cannot get there to receive humane and caring personal services, which, after all, is part of the process of cure. We all know the difficulties. In many ways, the solution is within our reach. It is to maintain our local facilities until such a time as the desirable goal of building a new local hospital can be attained.

For all those reasons, I have received 7,000 letters and submissions. I venture to suggest that few other hon. Members will have received 7,000 separate letters on a single issue, although that number of people might sign petitions. Opening most of those individual letters myself has been a sobering task. Many people have related personal anecdotes and stories about the importance of the hospital and the difficulties that they and their families would face. It is heart-rending to read what people say about the prospect of losing the large range of services at Sheppey.

That is why, once again, I have brought this proposition to my right hon. Friend the Minister. I ask him to try to cut through the planning and financial red tape and to make

[Mr. Roger Moate]

it clear to the hospital authorities that it is unacceptable to continue to concentrate hospital facilities in the Medway area to the detriment of the people of Swale. We must maintain those local facilities to high standards even if it means a modest improvement of local facilities for the next decade, until such time as we can make the prospect of the Swale district general hospital come true. We do not expect miracles, but we expect sensible planning and compassion. We feel more and more that they are lacking from the long-term plans of the planning authorities.

Swale considers itself to be the poor relation in the poorest hospital district in the south-east. I warmly welcome the extra expenditure committed to Medway. It is wrong that people are misled into believing that there are wholesale cuts or that the changes are the result of cuts in expenditure. The reverse is true. Medway will have one of the finest, new hospitals in the south-east. It is unacceptable to my constituents that, parallel with the improved facilities, there should be a withdrawal of facilities from the hospitals of which they are so proud on the Isle of Sheppey and in other parts of Swale.

2.45 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): I first congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) on having once again secured an Adjournment debate in which to raise matters affecting hospital medical provision in his constituency. This time, my hon. Friend has concentrated his debate on the proposed district general hospital at Swale. He referred to the proposed closure of some surgical facilities. My hon. Friend must recognise that certain procedures are laid down in law which must be followed in the case of closure proposals to which objection has been made by the community health council, and I assume that objections will be made in this case. It would be wrong for me to comment on a matter which will come before Ministers for decision. I assure my hon. Friend that the proper procedures will be followed.

I know that my hon. Friend is voicing the concern of many of his constituents about developments in that part of the Medway health district to which he referred—the Isle of Sheppey. He did so eloquently in an Adjournment debate last March on the Sheppey maternity unit. As a result of what he said on that occasion, the proposals were modified. I hope that my hon. Friend will take that as a sign that careful consideration is given to all the points that he makes.

My hon. Friend is well known for the role he plays in representing his constituents' interests. The 7,000 letters to which he referred are a tribute to him. I suspect some hon. Members—I would not be foolish enought to say where they sit or who they are—do not have 7,000 constituents who believe that it is worth writing to their hon. Member. My hon. Friend clearly commands much respect among his constituents, who believe that if they write to him, it will affect what happens in the future.

I shall not add to what was said by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction in response to the Adjournment debate last March about the Sheppey maternity unit. However, I should make it clear that the Government do not lay down in detail what should or should not be the pattern of service in different localities. Indeed, as soon as one thinks of the task that would be involved and the burden that would rest on civil servants and Ministers, one would recognise that it would be impossible. Hospital provision, whether of a district general hospital or of a more specialist kind, must be planned flexibly in the light of resources available, of professional advice and of local circumstances and demand.

I know that my hon. Friend recognises that demands for health care are pretty well unlimited while most claims that are made on health care resources are desirable. He also recognises that resources are not unlimited and so priorities must be established nationally, regionally and locally. The demand and the need for a district general hospital in the Sittingbourne and Swale area is, I understand, fully recognised by both regional and district health authorities. The crucial issue is not whether such a hospital is needed but the timing of priorities and resources. My hon. Friend acknowledged that.

If Swale were the sole district general hospital development proposed for the Medway health authority, there would be nothing to debate. It would no doubt be more than halfway to completion. However, the development at Swale is one of two major schemes in preparation by the district health authority. Given that resources are finite, the authority's decision is that the phase III development at Medway—costing some £35 million at 1984 prices — should take priority. This decision rests firmly with the health authority, and was, I am advised, taken on three main grounds. The authority saw its first priority as providing a development which would substantially reduce the overall shortage of beds and services in the district. Development on a new site, at Sittingbourne or elsewhere, would require money to be spent providing back-up services, roads, stores, and so on, and thereby reducing the potential sum available for patient services. The greater part of the district's population—about two thirds—is concentrated in the Medway towns and understandably, the authority believes that that is where its present effort to develop services should be focused.

The phase III Medway development is expected to become operational in stages during the years 1988-89 to 1991-92. The early stages will result in the internal transfer of services, but the later stages will enable more work to be undertaken within the district with a corresponding reduction of work currently going out to other districts.

Once this is achieved, the Medway health authority, I hope by then more self-sufficient and better funded through its increased RAWP allocations, will be equipped to prepare for a second district general hospital development at Swale. As I have mentioned, the need and demand for such a development is well recognised. Inclusion of surgical beds, for instance at Swale, will make possible a rationalisation of acute services throughout the district and the phasing out of some of the older, smaller hospitals that are increasingly less able to provide a modern and comprehensive health service.

I know that the district health authority has the support of the local authority, the community health council, the regional health authority as well as that of my hon. Friend and his neighbouring colleagues who will be affected. Support for the Swale development is widespread—I know of no one who opposes it. Therefore, in principle, everything appears to be in its favour, the only problem being time and resources. Once the resources are

available, my hon. Friend can feel confident that the planned development will become a reality. However, I would be less than honest if I left any impression that I foresaw early action being taken. As my hon. Friend recognised, there is a long time scale. I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern that that timescale seems to be stretching so far ahead at the moment that people will not be able to think of there being a real plan but just a hope and dream for the future.

I shall pass on to the regional chairman what my hon. Friend has said, and in particular I shall pass on his desire to take the early steps, which might well be highly sensible when considering the time scale that must be followed for major developments of this kind.

I have also noted and been impressed by what my hon. Friend said about the need to deal with the existing services in the area so that they do not present real difficulties for the population who would be left with a declining service and only a long-term and distant hope for the improvements that all agree are necessary.

I understand the pressure and thrust of what my hon. Friend is saying. He is not demanding more money at the moment and he is not saying that another area should be denuded in order to help his own. I was grateful for his comments about the significant developments in the Medway district, and I also recognise his concern for the longer term on behalf of his constituents.

I suspect that my hon. Friend did not believe that I would have available in my hip pocket today a post-dated cheque or a promise in hard terms that the Swale district general hospital would be in the programme by a certain date. But once again my hon. Friend has performed a valuable service for his constituents by drawing the attention of the House to the problem, particularly by commenting on the transport difficulties that many of his constituents face. I shall try to ensure that all those matters are taken into consideration on any decision that Ministers have to make.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 12 May 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Point of Ayr Liquefaction Plant

1. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made in the development of the liquefaction pilot plant at Point of Ayr.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): The National Coal Board has now begun construction at Point of Ayr. Commissioning is expected in late 1987.

Mr. Barron: I welcome the Minister's statement about the start of construction. However, is it not true that the public funds that were committed to this project by the last Labour Government have been severely reduced by this Government and that the size of the plant has also been severely reduced? One of our major competitors, Japan, is spending £127 million on non-nuclear reasearch, 56 per cent. of which is being spent on research into coal gasification and liquefaction. Has not the Government's intervention since 1979 impeded the introduction of coal liquefaction and of other uses for coal?

Mr. Hunt: No. This is an important project for the National Coal Board. Its process, which appears to be one of the strongest technically, produces a premium synthetic crude which is easily refined into aviation and other transport fuels. Under this Government, public sector commitment to research and development into coal utilisation is in excess of £100 million.

Mr. Raffan: Is my hon. Friend aware that the beginning of the construction of this pilot plant is widely welcomed in my constituency as evidence of the Government's commitment to coal to oil liquefaction? Is that not a tribute to the NCB's foresight and determination to ensure that Britain has a share of the potential market opportunity when there is an increase in the price of oil relative to that of coal?

Mr. Hunt: I am happy to assure my hon. Friend that the board has advised me that the project is on schedule and within budget. Civil engineering work began on 6 January and completion is expected in August.

Mr. Eadie: Is it not ironic that the Minister should have the audacity to come to the Dispatch Box and praise the project as one of the best in the country, when that same project was on the table in 1979 and it has taken the Government nine years to make up their mind? In essence, we have a laboratory scheme at Point of Ayr. Nevertheless, the Opposition endorse the conversion of the hon. Gentleman and his Government. We also endorse the NCB's enthusiasm, but it has taken nine years for that to happen.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman seeks to make political points out of a project where there is no room for such petty points. The coal industry has had its best deal since nationalisation from this Government.

NCB (North Yorkshire Area)

2. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest productivity figures for the north Yorkshire area of the National Coal Board; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): Deep mined revenue productivity in the north Yorkshire area of the National Coal Board averaged 3·36 tonnes per man shift in the week ending 19 April. The future prosperity of the coal industry depends upon continuing efforts to reduce production costs.

Mr. O'Brien: In view of the Secretary of State's answer and of the sterling work done by the men in the north Yorkshire coalfield in particular, but throughout the coalfields in general, will he have a word with the stone-hearted Mr. MacGregor of British Coal and ask him immediately to settle the mineworker's pay increase and to leave the pension scheme as a separate issue? A settlement is due to the men. I ask the Secretary of State to intervene and ensure that they receive their just reward.

Mr. Walker: I have no intention of intervening. This is a matter for negotiation between the National Coal Board and the National Union of Mineworkers.

Mr. Michael Morris: Do not those figures demonstrate that when men are allowed to respond to good management they produce good figures? Furthermore, should we not as a House congratulate British Coal on its fine performance in the past 12 months?

Mr. Walker: Yes. These are substantial improvements on any productivity figures since nationalisation.

Mr. Mason: What assurances can the Secretary of State give about the future of Redbrook colliery in the north Yorkshire coalfield?

Mr. Walker: That is a matter for discussion between the National Coal Board and the industry.

Mr. Yeo: Are not increases in productivity in north Yorkshire and elsewhere one way in which miners can secure their jobs for the long-term, in sharp contrast to the action taken by Arthur Scargill last year?

Mr. Walker: Yes and another result of the good productivity figures is that, under the various incentive schemes, the miners have gone back with good wage packets.

Oil Prices

4. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what requests for meetings he has received from oil companies as a result of the fall in the price of oil per barrel; and from which companies.

7. **Mr. Rowlands** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate his Department has made of the impact of falling oil prices on developments in the North sea.

Mr. Peter Walker: I meet the companies regularly, and they are free to raise any subject they choose. As the market remains volatile, and future oil prices uncertain, it is impossible to say at this stage what the impact will be on North sea development.

Mr. Litherland: Why, since we have had a fall in oil prices, has there been no real reduction in the cost of such things as air travel, and especially petrol, plastic commodities and paint? Does that not show that big business is making bigger profits and that it has cocked a snook at the Chancellor of the Exchequer? Should there not be some real, meaningful discussion?

Mr. Walker: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman's premise. There have been substantial falls in the price of petrol. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was jeered for his prediction, but it has been more than surpassed in the period since. As existing contracts come to fruition, there is no doubt that other industrial prices will benefit from the lower oil price.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of a number of statements by major oil companies casting serious doubts on long-term developments in the North sea? Should there not be a greater sense of urgency in discussions with the oil companies, so that we do not fall into the trap of becoming more and more dependent on OPEC countries in the 1990s?

Mr. Walker: It would be a mistake to rush through a load of decisions on the basis of an immediate fluctuation in the oil price. I forget what the oil price was when we last answered questions, but it has moved up and down in an erratic way. No one would like to predict with any accuracy what it will be at the end of the year. Rightly, the oil companies have issued warnings that, if prices stay at these low levels, some investment decisions will have to be deferred, but at the moment they are waiting to make a judgment on the market.

Mr. McCrindle: I take my right hon. Friend's point about the renewal of contracts, but is it not somewhat surprising that over a period when the price of crude oil has fallen by 60 per cent. the cost of aviation fuel appears to have fallen by less than 15 per cent.? Does that cause my right hon. Friend any concern? In particular, will he be prepared to draw that to the attention of the oil companies next time they request a meeting?

Mr. Walker: I shall look at the trends in the cost of aviation fuel. There is considerable competition around the world, but I shall look into my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Bearing in mind that for the first time for about 15 years the price of oil has halved, is it true that other energy prices will fall in line with it for the first time for many years? Is it likely that, because of the falling cost of oil, the cost of electricity and perhaps even coal will fall, so that consumers will receive the benefit in their household and industrial bills?

Mr. Walker: Yes. In the electricity industry there is potential competition between oil and coal. Therefore, if the coal industry is to retain its contracts, it must take note of the present competition from the oil industry. Talks are taking place between the coal industry and the Central Electricity Generating Board with that purpose in mind. If, as a result, the cost of coal is reduced, it will be the consumer, both domestic and industrial, who will benefit.

Mr. Kennedy: As the Secretary of State has admitted that already some companies are postponing investments, would this not be an opportunity for his Department to put pressure on colleagues at the Treasury to hold the Chancellor to his undertaking in the Budget, that if there were clear evidence of worthwhile projects being frustrated changes in incremental investment to the fiscal regime would be swiftly introduced, particularly as the Finance Bill would be an appropriate opportunity for the Government to do just that?

Mr. Walker: No. On the evidence available, I do not think that immediate action of that sort should be taken by the Chancellor. However, my right hon. Friend has ensured in the past and is intent on ensuring in the future that taxation of North sea oil takes account of the realistic assessment of the economic conditions there. I am sure that he will do that.

Mr. Favell: When may we expect a reduction in the price of electricity?

Mr. Walker: When agreement is reached on the price of coal, the benefit to industrial and commercial clients occurs swiftly, because of the nature of the contracts in that area which automatically get reduced as costs reduce. It would be for the electricity boards to decide when and how to fix the domestic tariff.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State give us some indication of the impact of the diminution in oil prices on jobs in Scotland? Will he also assure us that, in addition to exhortations to the oil companies to continue developments, the Government intend to take positive action to safeguard the onshore industry, which has been built up so painfully in recent years?

Mr. Walker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, a great deal of activity is still taking place in the North sea, and the oil companies themselves very much wanted us to have a further round of licensing. A great deal of exploration work is taking place. However, what happens will depend on trends in the oil price, and none of us can have any certainty about that. We shall have to watch developments and take action accordingly.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Notwithstanding what the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) said, should there not be a great welcome for the fall in oil prices? Is not the only concern the fact that there is still too much variance in fuel prices, particularly petroleum? If my right hon. Friend were able to come to Leicester, he would find petrol in Melton road at 1·58 per gallon, which is very good value compared with prices in other parts of the country.

Mr. Walker: There is no doubt that substantial competition is taking place at petrol pumps throughout the country, and the consumer and industry are benefiting.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Further to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), is the Secretary of State aware of the impact that falling oil prices are having on the city of Aberdeen? What is the right hon. Gentleman doing to ensure that we shall be able to receive the benefits of North sea oil in future?

Surely the right hon. Gentleman is aware that we are facing a short-term problem. Is he satisfied that the Government are doing enough to ensure that the benefits of North sea oil will be available to us soon?

Mr. Walker: Developments are still coming forward on quite a substantial scale. The hon. Gentleman's assessment, that future development in the North sea may be needed because this may be a temporary drop in the oil price and, therefore, we need production in the mid 1990s, is shared by a number of oil companies. That is the reason for their interest in continuing exploration and development and further rounds of licensing.

British Gas

5. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the British Gas Corporation to discuss privatisation.

Mr. Peter Walker: I regularly meet the chairman of the British Gas Corporation.

Mr. Powell: Given the fall in oil prices and the questions raised by a number of my hon. Friends, and given that there is such a delay in legislation getting through the other place, when does the Secretary of State expect to float shares in BGC, and what does he expect to get for them?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, as a result of the elections on Thursday, it is high time that the Government reconsidered their position on this major legislation and withdrew their controversial proposal?

Mr. Walker: I am delighted to say that the progress of the legislation is exceedingly good and that preparations for the flotation are going well. I look forward to the floatation in the autumn, and I shall do my best to ensure that the hon. Gentleman gets a special form.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that BGC employees are looking forward to privatisation because they will have a direct stake and interest in their industry for the first time, and that customers are looking forward to privatisation because they know that they will get a better service?

Mr. Walker: I believe that both employees and customers are looking forward to privatisation. Doubtless its widespread popularity is the reason why Opposition Members are not looking forward to it.

Mr. Orme: Does the Secretary of State agree that, given the fall in oil prices, we should not sell the shares at any price?

Mr. Walker: I agree that we should not sell the shares at any absurd price, but there is nothing happening at present that will prevent a successful flotation in the autumn.

Moscow (Ministerial Visit)

6. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Moscow.

Mr. Peter Walker: My many high-level meetings revealed substantial scope for enhanced energy trade with the Soviet Union. The detailed memorandum of understanding which I signed with the Chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technology opens the way to progress in many areas of mutual interest. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Weetch: I thank the Secretary of State for that answer. Does he realise that the widespread reporting of his visit in the press, in the light of the serious events recently in the failure of Soviet nuclear technology, has thrown up a great deal of retrospective interest in that visit? Will he tell the House whether he discussed nuclear safety with Soviet officials? Does he accept that in large parts of East Anglia there are misgivings and forebodings about the serious failure in Soviet nuclear technology, and that he could ease feelings in East Anglia if he would act decisively and recommend cancellation of the pressurised water reactor?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman's latter point is a matter for the Sizewell inquiry, and decisions on that will be taken when the report is received, which will probably be in September this year.

I had discussions with those responsible for the nuclear industry in the Soviet Union, and I agreed with them the importance of having a better relationship on problems of waste disposal, safety and other technical issues. They expressed themselves in favour of achieving that. Certainly the views expressed in the Soviet Union show that it does want greater liaison, and its attitude of the past few days towards the International Atomic Energy Agency shows some sign that it is now considering taking an international approach to the problem.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: Did my right hon. Friend have an opportunity to explain to his hosts that the British nuclear programme, which started at Calder Hall exactly 30 years ago this year, is based on gas-cooled reactors? Does he agree that that system has proved itself inherently very safe because, should there be a loss of coolant, there is a longer time to take remedial action than would apply in a water-cooled reactor, where overheating, fire, or something worse, can take place, as we have found out?

Mr. Walker: The heating of the Soviet reactor is on a scale different from any system of reactor operated in the West. There are some fundamental differences. Certainly we are proud of the safety record that has been achieved in this country, and it is important that we ensure that that continues.

Mr. Benn: In view of the openness which is now being pushed, quite properly, by the Government on the Russian Government following events at Chernobyl, will the Secretary of State give an assurance that he will suspend work and expenditure on the PWR until the full report of the Chernobyl inquiry is available for examination in this country and that the House, not Ministers, will take the decision on whether to go ahead?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir. In the normal way the Sizewell report will be examined in full. It will be made available to and debated in the House. Unlike the Soviet system, before any such development takes place here there are planning inquiries and parties can democratically present their views in the House. I expect that the Soviet people would like a similar system in their country.

Mr. Portillo: When my right hon. Friend next visits Moscow, will he extend sympathy to the people of the Soviet Union on the nuclear accident? Will he confirm

now that the nuclear accident in the Soviet Union makes nuclear power in the United Kingdom neither safer nor more dangerous and that the risks involved were taken into account? Will my right hon. Friend do what he can to ensure that the debate in this country is conducted rationally, not hysterically?

Mr. Walker: Anybody looking at the long-term problems of energy will recognise that there is tremendous advantage to the world in having this form of energy throughout the next century. People will also realise that there are potential dangers if the industry is not conducted safely and well and with every possible safety measure taken. Therefore, it is important to get proper international standards operating throughout the world.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Secretary of State accept that one future benefit from this appalling accident might be better international co-operation on nuclear energy? Has the right hon. Gentleman been able to use the contacts that he made during his visit to Moscow since the Chernobyl disaster?

Mr. Walker: I immediately contacted the various Ministers I had seen, including the Deputy Prime Minister, who has been placed in charge of the inquiry into the incident. I spent several hours with him when I was in Moscow. I offered the Russians all the help that we could give, and some of the help that they have requested has been provided by this country. Since then I have communicated with the Deputy Prime Minister and asked for the fullest detail of what took place. I also asked that the type of working party that we suggested when we were there should quickly be put into operation, so that we get the maximum collaboration.

Mr. Stern: Does my right hon. Friend agree, in the light of his visit and the recent regrettable events in the Soviet Union, that a premium has always been, and will now be even more so, placed on this country having the safest form of nuclear power generation? Depending on the results of the inquiry, does my right hon. Friend agree that the safest form might be the pressurised water reactor?

Mr. Walker: There were more than two years of hearings during the Sizewell inquiry and a distinguished person took more than one and a half years to write the report. Before any decisions are made, I think it is right that we all objectively examine and read that report.

Mr. Orme: The Secretary of State, on his return from the Soviet Union on 27 April, praised nuclear development there and stated that it was an excellent nuclear industry. That was in dramatic conflict with his statements post-Chernobyl. Was he advised on the safety of those power stations, and will he explain the contradiction between those statements?

Mr. Walker: On my return I said that the Soviet Union had decided to double the size of its nuclear industry, and it has confirmed that since. I made no comment at all on the safety elements.

North Sea Allocations

11. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to complete the allocations to exploration company applicants of blocks in the lastest round of North sea concession areas.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): Consultations on the 10th round are now taking place. I expect the round to be completed some time next year.

Mr. Dykes: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, despite the fall in the oil price, he and the Government expect a healthy weight of applications? Will he further confirm, not only that the timetable will be kept, but that British companies will get more than their fair share of these applications?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: With regard to the 10th round, what matters is the price of oil, not today, but in the 1990s. The oil industry is a long-term, continuing industry. I am glad to say that I have had every indication from the oil industry that it welcomes the announcement of this round and intends to support it.

Mr. Rowlands: Does the right hon. Gentleman intend to pursue previous practice and ensure that, in any developments arising from those blocks, conditions relating to United Kingdom rates and yards will be included in the licence conditions?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: While licence applications are being considered, every oil company making an application has interviews with my Department. I shall certainly bear very much in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said. As he knows, I am determined that the United Kingdom should play a full part in the development of the industry, particularly the new high technology.

National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd.

12. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the latest progress of National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. in providing alternative employment in coalmining areas.

Mr. David Hunt: At the end of April 1986 NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. had committed £10 million, assisting 488 projects, which will create 6,410 job opportunities. That commitment has generated a further £52·7 million of investment from other sources.

Mr. Dormand: Is the Minister aware that, in spite of the figures that he has given, having regard to the number of jobs lost through pit closures, the NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. scheme is almost a complete failure? That is so in my area and in the north-east. Is there to be any increase in the resources available to NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.? Will any other changes be made to convince the people of the mining areas that the whole thing is not a sham to cover up pit closures?

Mr. Hunt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have made it clear in the Chamber many times that there is no shortage of funds available for those who come forward with proposals for the creation of real jobs in coalmining areas. As for Easington, I understand that NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. is contributing towards a study of the east Durham coalfield, which will examine the problems of developing the potential of the area. To date, NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. has provided assistance for nine projects in the Easington area and is at an advanced stage of discussions with Easington district council about building starter units costing about £100,000. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would pause for a moment to pay tribute to the magnificent efforts of those involved in NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. in producing such remarkable results.

Mrs. Currie: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on the success of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.? Does he agree with the comments made by many of my constituents, who have said that the help now available to those coping with change in the industry is far more generous than it was under Labour Governments, especially in the 1960s, when a dozen pits closed in south Derbyshire? Does he agree that the Government keep their promises and help those who need assistance with this scheme?

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for putting the record straight. No one would pretend that NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. will provide an immediate answer to the serious employment problems of mining communities faced with pit closures, but it continues to show encouraging results.

Mr. Boyes: Is the Minister aware that, in the report on the east Durham coalfield, of which he has a copy, produced by Easington district council, Durham county council and Sunderland borough council, projects worth about £78 million were mentioned, of which £30 million were for the Sunderland borough council area? Is he also aware that, at the careers office, 4,500 youngsters are registered as having no proper jobs and that there are only 94 job vacancies? Why does he not give the £30 million to Sunderland borough council so that it can get on with some of the projects, create jobs for youngsters and, above all, give them some future?

Mr. Hunt: The enterprise company works closely with bodies such as local authorities and welcomes any ideas for the creation of real jobs, but it must be remembered that the enterprise company was established with the principal aim of creating permanent jobs in coalmining areas rather than the temporary jobs that tend to result from the infrastructure improvements proposed in "Communities in the East Durham Coalfield".

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Since the decline in oil prices is likely to accelerate pit closures, will the Government give firm undertakings that NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. will be given vastly increased funds to avoid the social and economic friction that will result from that accelerated closure programme?

Mr. Hunt: The important point to make about the company is that it has had remarkable results in persuading into coalmining areas funds that have always been available from banks, in venture capital resources and from other Government sources. It has continued its impressive record. Money already allocated will provide approaching £150 million of total investment. The resources of the enterprise company will be kept under careful review.

Mr. Portillo: Is my hon. Friend as dismayed as I am to hear some Opposition Members carping about the efforts of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.? Does not their attitude threaten to undermine the good work that the company has done?

Mr. Hunt: I have been most disappointed by the attitude of some Opposition Members. Others have come forward with extremely good and constructive ideas. I wish that their colleagues would follow that example.

National Coal Board

13. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of the National Coal Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I meet the chairman of the National Coal Board at regular intervals to discuss a wide variety of issues concerning the coal industry.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Secretary of State be complimenting the chairman of British Coal on the fact that, unlike the miners, he will receive his golden handshake from his firm as well as his wages, even though it takes two to make a strike? Will he ask him to publish a list of those employed by NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.? It has been drawn to our attention that two of the people who have obtained real jobs in that company are Colin Clarke, who was a member of the National Working Miners Committee, who recently received his redundancy pay from the Coal Board, and Roy Ottey, who did not support the strike although he was a member of the NUM executive, but who supported MacGregor and the Secretary of State for Energy? Is it not a question of jobs for the boys who supported MacGregor, the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, and not for displaced miners?

Mr. Walker: The productivity improvements that have taken place in the coal industry over the past year will do more to guarantee future jobs in the industry than anything else that has taken place. We are hearing incredible carping about an organisation that has already produced more than 6,000 new jobs and encouraged £50 million-worth of new investment, with another £10 million being allocated to it. I only wish that the hon. Gentleman would praise the excellent work that is being done, instead of carping.

Mr. Rost: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the board is now giving proper recognition to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers as the only union representing the best interests of the miners and the future of the coal mining industry?

Mr. Walker: The board is giving recognition to those unions which have the majority representation in the various establishments.

Mr. Hardy: As even this Government accept that the coal industry must have a significant future, is it not sad that the board's youngest employee in south Yorkshire is now almost 20 years of age? When the Secretary of State next meets the chairman of the board, will he point out that the board needs to appoint more young people to ensure that there is continuity of labour and maintenance of skills in the industry?

Mr. Walker: Yes. I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's point to the board's attention.

Mr. Michael Clark: When my right hon. Friend met the chairman of the board, did he discuss with him the possibility of raising productivity in British pits to a higher level than it has reached already, ackowledging that there has been a great increase in productivity since the strike?

Mr. Walker: Yes. I think the Coal Board is well aware that fierce competition exists in world markets and that it is important to have still further improvements in world productivity.

Mr. Orme: The Secretary of State urged dismissed miners to put their case to industrial tribunals, and what has been the result? Is he aware that in 62 cases re-employment was advised by tribunals, but that only six dismissed miners have been taken back by the board? Is this justice? What will he do about this?

Mr. Walker: It is a matter for the board, and the board will have to make its decision.

Pressurised Water Reactors

15. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress towards the introduction of pressurised water reactors in the United Kingdom.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): The CEGB's application to construct a pressurised water reactor at Sizewell has been the subject of a public inquiry. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy will reach a decision on the application as soon as possible once he has the inspector's report.

Mr. Proctor: To reassure public opinion, does my hon. Friend think that it would be a good idea, between the submission of the inspector's report on Sizewell and a final decision being made by the Government, for a full parliamentary debate to be held?

Mr. Goodlad: The holding of a parliamentary debate is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the usual channels. I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to their attention.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Instead of investing in a pressurised water reactor, will the Government consider reopening the arguments over tidal barrages, and especially the scheme for the Solway Firth, which would have provided for the production at peak demand of 1,400 Mw? Would that not be a far better way of investing public money? I do not expect an immediate answer on the Solway barrier scheme, but will the Minister at least take it off the shelf, dust it down and re-examine the arguments that were employed 20 years ago?

Mr. Goodlad: Any decision on the PWR must await the outcome of the Sizewell inquiry. I shall consider the issue of the Solway Firth barrage.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Will my hon. Friend make it clear that the Chernobyl reactor contained graphite moderators, which are not present in PWRs? Does he agree that the sequence of disasters that led to the release of radioactivity at Chernobyl could not occur in a PWR?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is quite right. The Chernobyl reactor is a very different design from the proposed PWR at Sizewell and from reactors currently operated in Britain.

NIREX

17. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to dispose of the Government's single special share in NIREX; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: No, Sir.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful to the Minister for that helpful reply. Perhaps he would now be kind enough to tell the House how the share is viewed by his Department and who represents the Department's views to NIREX. Does he agree that it would be better if the Government's interest was looked after by the Department of the Environment, which, after all, has an interest in maintaining and safeguarding the environment? Is not the watchdog too closely identified with the burglar at the moment?

Mr. Goodlad: Whether the special share should be held by the Secretary of State for the Environment or by the Secretary of State for Energy was considered carefully before United Kingdom NIREX was set up. The Secretary of State for Energy answers for the nuclear industry and NIREX in Parliament, so it was considered that he should hold the share. That remains the Government's view.

THE ARTS

Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme

36. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Minister for the Arts which art forms win most business sponsorship incentive scheme awards.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): The awards are widely spread, but music has received 33 per cent. of the awards, the theatre 21 per cent. and festivals 11 per cent.

Mrs. Bottomley: Although I welcome the fact that music and the theatre have taken advantage of the BSIS, does my right hon. Friend agree that more could be done to encourage local festivals to use this successful scheme, which brings money into the arts through sponsorship?

Mr. Luce: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. There is enormous scope for sponsoring local festivals, which rank third in terms of the level of support. For example, the Glasgow Festival now has sponsorship. The more that my hon. Friend and others can do to encourage sponsorship, the better.

Mr. Freud: Will the restoration of Hampton Court palace be eligible under the BSIS?

Mr. Luce: That is principally a responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, but it does not qualify.

Equity (South Africa)

37. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has received any representations from the actors union Equity to apply a cultural sanctions policy against South Africa.

Mr. Luce: No, Sir.

Mr. Atkinson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Equity, following a referendum in which only 10·5 per cent. of its members took part, decided to ban its members from working in South Africa? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that decision would be more credible if it applied to the Soviet Union, where the only expression of artistic and cultural freedom is to defect?

Mr. Luce: The High Court has granted an injunction preventing Equity from implementing that policy until the Court has considered its legality further. The matter, therefore, is sub judice. The broader issues are primarily matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign

Secretary, but our broad policy is that there should not be cultural visits to South Africa if they are in any way likely to encourage apartheid.

Mr. Buchan: I agree with the Minister that we should not probe too deeply as this is a matter for judicial proceedings, but does he agree that arts and culture also involve morality and social interpretation? Should not the Minister's party be pleased that the decision was made as a result of a ballot in the trade union? Should it not therefore be supported?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman anticipated that it would not be right for me to comment further on this case. I have explained our policy with regard to South Africa.

EC (Cultural Co-operation)

38. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Minister for the Arts what initiatives he is taking in the European Economic Community to promote cultural co-operation.

Mr. Luce: I shall be chairing a meeting of Ministers of Culture during the United Kingdom presidency and hope to put forward initiatives encouraging further cultural co-operation. In addition, my office is funding jointly with the Community a major symposium by the British Film Institute on "Film and Television: a European partnership", and I expect to have discussions with some of my opposite numbers in other member states.

Mr. Sackville: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that such co-operation should be limited to cases in regard to which there is some practical benefit for the countries concerned?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. Although it is healthy for Ministers of Culture of the European Community to meet and discuss areas of mutual interest, the matter is one principally for national Governments and there should be co-operation only when there is benefit to us all.

Works of Art (Displays)

39. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the extent of works of art in national collections which are not regularly displayed to the public.

Mr. Luce: The proportion of the collections in the national museums and galleries on public display at any one time varies from institution to institution. Most institutions aim to rotate items between public display and the reserve collection. All allow access by members of the public to items in their reserve collections by arrangement. They are aware of the need to improve public access generally, and I encourage them to do all they can within available resources.

Mr. Maclennan: Is the Minister aware that there is some concern that certain institutions are hoarding collections that should be made available much more widely throughout the nations and the regions of the country? As they tend to excuse themselves by praying in aid evidence of the complexity of the indemnity arrangements, will the Government take some initiative to overcome this problem to ensure that there is wider dispersal of these national collections?

Mr. Luce: As I said earlier, the practices of institutions —principally the nine that receive money from myself on behalf of the Government—are extremely varied. I am most anxious to encourage the maximum exhibition of objects of art—those that are in national institutions and stored away—in all regions of the country, not just in London. The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the policy on indemnity. Three out of the nine national institutions have doubts about the Government's policy on indemnity. We have therefore had discussions with them, and hope that shortly all three will join the other institutions and do everything that they can to lend objects of art to various parts of the country.

Mr. Soames: Nevertheless, does my right hon. Friend agree that the museum authorities are extremely unhelpful about requests of this type? Will he assure the House that no reasonable and properly underwritten request will be turned down for the loan of such pictures in the provinces?

Mr. Luce: In principle, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the more that pictures and objects of art are lent in various parts of the country the better, but it is up to the trustees of the institutions to decide what they can and cannot lend. In fact, they must have insurance coverage before they can lend. It is that problem of indemnity that I am now seeking to overcome.

Business Sponsorship

40. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has given any guidance to the Association for Business Sponsorship in the Arts on matching funds provided by trades unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: There is at present no special guidance to the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts on funding provided by trades unions; the same rules apply to trades unions as apply to businesses.

Mr. Banks: Why did the Minister support ABSA's recent act of political censorship against the Crucible theatre, when it refused to match a grant from NALGO for the sponsorship of the play "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui", which is a Berthold Brecht play? Does the Minister approve of this sort of political censorship by ABSA? Is it not the thin end of the wedge? What other productions would he be prepared to support ABSA in censoring, given that he supported ABSA on that occasion?

Mr. Luce: There is absolutely no question of any censorship on the part of ABSA. The play to which the hon. Gentleman referred, in respect of which the producers had asked for sponsorship from NALGO, went ahead as planned and was not stopped in any way. The sponsorship was stopped, and neither I nor ABSA can accept sponsorship that leads to party political activities and propaganda. To do otherwise brings the whole sponsorship scheme into total disrepute. Sponsorship must therefore be confined to promoting the main products or services, and nothing else.

Mr. Buchan: To be precise, it was not the sponsorship that was stopped, but the matching funds, and that arose because of the interpretation of politics and party political argument. I have read the material carefully. It is certainly political, but it is not party political. NALGO would have used exactly the same argument—and has in the past—in relation to Labour Governments. Does the Minister not accept that in this interpretation we must make a distinction between sponsorship from private and

commercial firms, which are concerned with profit, and that from trade unions, which are concerned with the well-being of their members and of society as a whole? That is the crucial distinction, and if the Minister fails to understand that, he will fail to understand the basis of trade union sponsorship.

Mr. Luce: The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that ABSA was unwilling to give the matching grant. Although it is right to allow trade unions to be part of the sponsorship scheme — my predecessor decided that, and I stick firmly to that policy—it is essential that the provision of taxpayers' money in the scheme should in no way lead to party political propaganda. That is what would have happened had the sponsorship been granted.

School Pupils

41. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Minister for the Arts what priority the Arts Council gives to promoting arts for school pupils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council and the regional arts associations actively encourage all their clients to develop and implement educational policies.

Mr. Greenway: How do those bodies encourage artists to go into schools, and facilitate first-class productions at places such as Stratford-on-Avon for children to see special performances for schools? Does my right hon. Friend accept that efforts with children at this stage will establish an interest in the arts for life, and that that is important?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the subject. The Arts Council has established a specific allocation of funds for educational development work, which amounts to £320,000 in 1986-87. That, in itself, is a substantial increase on the previous financial year. In addition, some of the regional arts associations fund placement schemes for writers, artists, musicians and so on to operate within schools to inspire and encourage the young. That is the right way to encourage schools to participate in arts activities.

CIVIL SERVICE

Administrative Forms

44. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Minister for the Civil Service if Her Majesty's Government are still committed to the simplification and review of administrative forms; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): The Government remain fully committed to this initiative. Review procedures are now firmly established in Departments and good progress continues to be made. Between 1982 and 1985 some 15,700 Government forms were scrapped. A further 21,300 have been redesigned. Savings to Departments are estimated at about £9 million per annum. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has asked the Management and Personnel Office for a further progress report in 1987.

Dr. Clark: While congratulating my right hon. Friend on the progress that has been made in the simplification of forms, in particular the use of simpler English, may I ask him whether he will now turn his attention to simplifying reports and letters written by civil servants? Will he please bring to their attention the fact that the height of sophistication is simplicity?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Plain English Campaign, whose exhibition I recently sponsored in the House, is doing a great deal to encourage the use of plain English. A number of recent examples include Inland Revenue and Department of Health and Social Security forms, which are much simplified and, I hope, of benefit to consumers. I agree with my hon. Friend that we need plainer English.

Mr. Favell: May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the passport application form, which is a model of simplicity and could be used as an example for many other forms?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving another example, and there are several of them. The Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise and the DHSS have all introduced much simplified forms, which benefits consumers.

Civil Service—Private Sector (Personnel Interchange)

45. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what steps have been taken to encourage interchange of personnel between the Civil Service and the private sector.

Mr. Luce: The Government continue to encourage the policy of secondments in both directions between the Civil Service and the private sector. Last year there were 386 secondments in both directions in operation with industry and commerce, an increase of 28 per cent. over 1984. The details are given in a report on the interchange programme published recently by the Management and Personnel Office, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Chapman: In welcoming that trend, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he agrees that there is scope for much greater interchange, particularly to enable civil servants to gain experience in industry, to the benefit of everybody? Will he sympathetically consider the additional incentive of setting up a trust along the lines of the Parliament and Industry Trust to encourage this interchange?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Government's objective is to encourage this. I am glad to say that there has been a 28 per cent. increase in 1985 over 1984. There is a Whitehall and industry scheme, which is clearly limited, but has started, in which a number of civil servants are able to have up to 15 days with businesses. This also plays its part. As to the broader area of concern, the information that I have given is confined to the private sector, but at least 520 other jobs are outward secondment for non-civil service sectors, including universities and colleges. This sector should be encouraged as well.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Is the Minister aware that one of the most important aspects of this secondment lies at a much higher level within the Civil Service, particularly assistant secretary and under-secretary grades? It is there that we are falling far short of what can be achieved. How many of those 386 civil servants come from the assistant secretary and under-secretary grades?

Mr. Luce: The right hon. Gentleman is right to pinpoint the fact that the bulk of secondments come in the principal grade, which is a lower grade. There are just over 11,000 principals. It is true that there are fewer secondments at more senior level. I am examining this to see whether more can be done to encourage secondment at a higher level.

Mr. Stokes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that contact by civil servants with the wider world of industry and commerce would give them a breath of fresh air and invigorate them for their future service in the public service?

Mr. Luce: I hope that that is what civil servants already find. A number of people—just under 200—come in from industry and the private sector for a period of secondment to the Civil Service, and that is also helpful.

Dr. McDonald: How many out of the 386 who have been given this opportunity are women? Will the Minister ensure that women in the principal grades are given proper opportunities, because this will enable them to achieve higher levels in the Civil Service later in their careers?

Mr. Luce: I cannot give an answer to the specific question without notice, but I shall make sure that the hon. Lady's question is answered. As she knows, the Civil Service and Government Departments are equal opportunity employers and we are pursuing that point as vigorously as possible.

Dispersal Policy

46. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Minister for the Civil Service how many Civil Service posts have been dispersed under the Government's programme for dispersal since 1979.

Mr. Luce: Some 5,017 posts have been dispersed since 1979 under the Government's programme.

Mr. Sackville: Does this mean that the number has gone up? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it remains the Government's policy to disperse as many employees as possible from the London area to areas of high unemployment, such as the north-west?

Mr. Luce: The policy that was adopted in 1979 was to disperse 5,900 civil servants to various parts of the country by the mid to late 1980s. In the past few weeks another 500 or so civil servants have been dispersed to the region around Glasgow, principally from the Ministry of Defence, so progress is being made.

Mr. MacKenzie: How many of the civil servants so dispersed have been of assistant secretary or under-secretary grade, because these are, after all, the policy-makers? How much policy can be made by the people in the areas to which they are dispersed?

Mr. Luce: Without some notice I cannot give a detailed answer, but the majority of civil servants are not the policy advisers. Policy advisors remain in London. The vast majority, if not all, are in administrative sectors of one kind or another, and have been dispersed to various parts of the country. It should be stressed that four out of five civil servants are already outside London.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it would help to redress the balance between the south and the north, and the south and the midlands, if many of those bodies which receive money and grants from the Government were told that they will continue to receive them only if they move their head offices north instead of using expensive buildings in London, which is often totally unnecessary?

Mr. Luce: Some regions, such as the north-east, have a high proportion of civil servants compared with the total working population. However, I am sure that they would like to have more civil servants. Several regions, including Scotland and the north-east, do quite well in terms of the number of civil servants there.

Dr. M. S. Miller: By how many does that figure of 5,900 fall short of the original Hardman proposals? Will the Minister bear in mind that my constituency of East Kilbride has so far seen only 60 per cent. of the 1,000 dispersed posts promised?

Mr. Luce: In 1979, when the Conservative party came to office, the Government took a clear decision that 5,900 was the right number to disperse. It is expensive to disperse civil servants, and a careful analysis needs to be made of the cost benefit of dispersal. But we are on course, and in the past few weeks another 500 civil servants have been dispersed.

Syria

3.30 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tim Renton): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the request by Her Majesty's Government to the Syrian Government to withdraw three members of the Syrian embassy from London.

This action followed a meeting between the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Sir Antony Acland, and the Syrian ambassador, Dr. Haydar, on 1 May. Sir Antony raised with Dr. Haydar allegations about Syrian involvement in certain terrorist activities in this country. On behalf of the police Sir Antony asked that the ambassador should waive diplomatic immunity of three attachés on his staff to enable the police to ask them questions about these allegations. On 5 May, the ambassador replied that the Syrian Government were not willing to allow diplomatic immunity to be waived but would permit interviews with members of his staff on Syrian embassy premises.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office informed the Metropolitan police of the terms on which the Syrian Government were prepared to allow questioning to be carried out. After careful consideration, the Metropolitan police concluded that interviews under such conditions could not result in evidence which might be used in court, and could not assist their investigation. When the ambassador called on 10 May, the Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr. Ewen Fergusson, therefore told him that the refusal of the Syrian authorities to meet our request for a waiver of diplomatic immunity, to allow the allegations against three members of his embassy to be fully investigated, was unacceptable. The ambassador was then told that the British Government required the withdrawal of the three attachés within seven days.

Yesterday, the Syrian Government requested the withdrawal of three members of the diplomatic staff of our embassy in Damascus. This retaliation is regrettable and totally unjustified.

We are now considering whether there is cause for any additional measures against Syria. It will be necessary to take into account all factors affecting our bilateral relations with Syria. These include the level of the diplomatic staff whom the Syrians have asked us to withdraw, and the need to protect British subjects in Syria. We shall of course bear in mind the commitments entered into by EC Foreign Ministers at Luxembourg and by the economic summit in Tokyo. We shall also take account of the continuing investigations into the responsibility of various countries for terrorist activity.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): We do not, of course, have access to the information on the El Al incident upon which the Government have relied, but we do not seek to dissent from the actions relating to the expulsion of those diplomats. However, how carefully did the Government scrutinise the information on the El Al incident that was derived from MOSSAD? The Israeli intelligence machine has a well-deserved reputation for information, and disinformation too. Clearly the Israelis have their own motives for seeking to turn the West against Syria. It would be helpful if the Minister told the House whether the special branch has an independent source of information about the attempt on El Al, which is the reason for the expulsions.

Does the Minister agree that the evidence which is now emerging about the Berlin bomb incident points in the direction of Syria rather than Libya as the directing Government? If so, were we at the time sufficiently sceptical of the information which we received from the United States—that it used the outrage in Berlin as a justification for its bombing of Libya and used our bases for that purpose?

The Minister concluded his statement with the words:

"We are now considering whether there is cause for any additional measures against Syria."

That suggests that the mutual expulsions may not be the end of the story. Will the Minister now distance us from the growing anti-Arab feeling in Washington which has been shown, for example, in the congressional attitude to the Saudi arms deal? Will he avoid falling into the trap which has been set by those who wish to use the terrorist threat as a possible cover for military action against Syria, and also caution the United States Administration, the Israelis and the Syrians about the excalating threat to regional and possibly world peace posed by the confrontation between the Syrian and the Israeli armies both on the Golan and in southern Lebanon?

Mr. Renton: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that our police are perfectly capable of doing their own leg work and their own investigations on this incident. The police received no information whatsoever from the Israeli sources. The action taken was on the basis of allegations made to the British police. I have noted the reports of the German police investigations into the bombing of the west Berlin discotheque. We have no reason to doubt our earlier conclusions about the extent of Libyan involvement in the placing of the bomb in the west Berlin discotheque.

As I said in my statement, we are considering whether any further measures are necessary. We do no wish to see any escalation of military action. Rather, the incident highlights the need for the peace process between Arab countries and Israel to be continued. In that context, I look forward to the Prime Minister's visit to Israel in the near future.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is this not yet another example of the bad behaviour of the Syrian embassy? For example, there was the case on new year's eve 1977 when two Syrian diplomats blew themselves up with a car bomb in central London. If the Minister is considering further action, will he at least try to limit the size of the Syrian embassy in London to the same size as the British embassy in Damascus?

Mr. Renton: I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend said. He is interested in such matters. We do not wish to enter into a tit-for-tat between ourselves and Damascus. Clearly the relative sizes of our embassy in Damascus and the Syrian embassy here is a point to be taken into consideration.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): If the Syrians are shown to have been involved with the Libyans in the Berlin bombing incident, and if the Syrians are shown to have been involved in any way in the El Al attempt to place a bomb, will the Government give an assurance that they will take diplomatic and economic sanctions and will take firm action, even to the extent of

closing the embassy, in co-operation with our European Community colleagues? Will the hon. Gentleman make a clear and categorical statement that the Government will not support retaliatory punitive action by the Israelis against Syria, even if Syrian involvement in the El Al incident is established?

Mr. Renton: We shall not hesitate to act firmly and appropriately if Syrian state involvement in terrorist activities is established as a result of our continuing investigations. Obviously, each situation must be rigorously examined on its merits. We wish to look at the full range of peaceful measures agreed by the Community and agreed at the Tokyo summit to ascertain which measures should be followed if Syrian involvement in terrorism is clearly established.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Although I support the Government's action and recognise that it is especially difficult for a country like Britain to have good relationships with the Syrian Administration, will my hon. Friend keep in mind that Syria has a key role to play in any future peace-making process in the middle east and that Syria is perfectly justified in trying to regain its territory, the Golan heights?

Mr. Renton: I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend. He is right in what he says about Syria's key role in the peace process. It is notable that President Assad met King Hussein in Amman at the end of last week, doubtless for further consideration of how that peace process could be carried forward.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Would the Government be prepared to waive diplomatic immunity if a corresponding request were made to us by another country such as the Soviet Union or Syria?

Mr. Renton: I must confess to the right hon. Gentleman that I find that question surprising. The point is that, in the light of the refusal to waive diplomatic immunity, Syrians were exempt from the obligation to give evidence in court, and in criminal proceedings written or hearsay evidence of interviews would not be admissible. That was why we insisted on diplomatic immunity being waived, and, if it was not, we required the three attachés to leave the country.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Government's decision is wholly justified in terms of the activities which many British people regard as not just unacceptable but monstrous? To what extent are inquiries being conducted into the activities of so-called diplomats in some other embassies? Will my hon. Friend give a reasonable assurance that no legitimate and passive Arab diplomat or representative has need to fear some Arab witch hunt?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for his support. I can certainly give him the assurance which he seeks—that no Arab diplomat need fear a witch hunt. However, where a clear connection with terrorism is established we shall act extremely firmly in dealing with it.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): With regard especially to the evil of the attempted outrage and the unparalleled barbarity of the alleged proposed method of carrying it out, I thank the Minister for not falling into the trap of anti-Israel paranoia which seems to afflict many people.

I should like to ask three questions. First, was one of those who were asked to leave a military attaché? Secondly, what was the involvement of Georges Shiha? Thirdly, if and when any relationship is re-established with the Syrians, will the hon. Gentleman tell them that it would be a great help if they gave information to the Red Cross or some other organisation about the whereabouts of Zachary Baumel, whose parents are in London asking for him, and his three colleagues?

Mr. Renton: None of those who has been asked to leave the country by the end of this week is a military attaché. I have noted in the newspapers the reference to Georges Shiha, but there is no evidence to support the description of Shiha's duties which has been given in some parts of our national press. Furthermore, Shiha was not one of the members of the Syrian embassy staff whom the police wished to question.

On the hon. and learned Gentleman's last humanitarian question, I think that he already knows that the matter has been raised by me and others with Syrian Ministers. They say that they are not able to give us any information about the whereabouts of those soldiers who disappeared. Whenever an opportunity arises, we shall continue to press for any information available about them.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): I congratulate my hon. Friend on the Government's prompt and vigorous response. Will he confirm that, whatever the issues in the middle east, state-sponsored terrorism is unacceptable and that that is the real reason for the Government's action.

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend. Yes, indeed, "prompt and vigorous" is the image of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I agree with him that, under whatever guise and from whatever source it appears, state-sponsored terrorism is one of the evils that the world has to face today, and we, in conjuction with our Community and other partners, will seek every means to combat it.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Do not these apparently incorrect charges about Libyan responsibility for the Berlin disco bombing and these even more convenient charges about Syria as a precursor to an Israeli attack on that country, which seems not unlikely in the next few months, call into question the reliability of both CIA and MOSSAD intelligence, upon which the British Government apparently lean for some information?

In view of the likelihood that Libya will be proved to have been not responsible for the disco bombing in Berlin, what compensation do Her Majesty's Government intend to pay to the Libyan authorities?

Mr. Renton: In his anxiety to make a dramatic point, the hon. Gentleman appears totally not to have listened to the answer that I gave earlier. I said to the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) that our evidence of Libyan involvement in the west Berlin bombing remains incontrovertible and that we have seen nothing whatever to contradict it.

As to the hon. Gentleman's point about the possibility of an Israeli attack on Syria, I should like to point out to him, in case he missed it, that the Israeli Prime Minister said in an interview on 9 May that Israel has no intention of attacking Syria and that there is no indication, either, that Syria is about to attack Israel. I understand that these comments by the Israeli Prime Minister have been repeated in an even more recent speech.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Mindful of the fact that when Abu Nidal attacked Shlome Arlov in this country in 1982 this was used as a pretext for the barbaric invasion of Lebanon by the Israelis, will my hon. Friend the Minister of State answer the question of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), on the basis of the allegation about the Israeli airliner, to confirm categorically that there is no justification whatsoever for an Israeli invasion of Syria?

Mr. Renton: On the involvement to which my hon. Friend has referred, I can go no further than I went in my statement. This matter is the subject of police inquiries and I cannot make any further comment.

On my hon. Friend's other point, I must repeat to him what I said earlier, that if the involvement of Syria in state terrorism were to be firmly established, we should not hesitate to act with the utmost rigour, particularly along the lines that have already been agreed for Libya by the European Community and in Tokyo.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Minister help the House by confirming, if possible, that the action of the Syrian ambassador in resisting the claims put upon him by the Metropolitan police was within the terms of the Vienna convention and that the Metropolitan police were attempting to extend their rights under the same convention? Does the Minister accept that our role is to look after British nationals in Syria? Is he able to say how many are involved, because they might be in danger in this tit-for-tat operation, and what advice his Department is giving to them?

Mr. Renton: On the hon. Gentleman's last point, I can assure him that there are approximately 250 British citizens in Syria. At the moment we are considering with our mission in Damascus whether any further advice needs to be given to them. On his earlier point, it is not quite right to say that the Metropolitan police attempted to extend the provisions of the Vienna convention. However, it is quite right that the Metropolitan police, through the Foreign Office, sought a waiver of the diplomatic immunity that is given by the Vienna convention. It was this that the Syrian ambassador refused to allow.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Is my hon. Friend satisfied with the surveillance of diplomats who are accredited to London and attached to the embassies of Governments sympathetic to terrorism? If he is, is not such surveillance expensive, and is not that a good reason for reducing the representation of those diplomats in London?

Mr. Renton: That is primarily a matter for the Home Office. I agree that surveillance is expensive. I take my hon. Friend's point on reducing the size of the diplomatic community here. However, there is, almost inevitably, reciprocity in that. If we require embassies in Britain, for whatever reason, to reduce substantially the number of their staff here, it is always likely that they will ask us to do the same in the countries to which our people are accredited. We try to operate near the minimun that we think is reasonable to give the sort of service that the British public, business men and others require.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): In my hon. Friend's opinion, do circumstances exist today which would justify an attack by Israel upon Syria?

Mr. Renton: I repeat that the Israeli Prime Minister has already said categorically that Israel has no plans to attack Syria, nor is he aware of any plans of Syria to attack Israel. I hope that the peace process can be carried forward, and one factor in that is the continuing occupation by Israel of a substantial part of the Golan heights.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that the firm response announced in his statement this afternoon is justified and necessary but that terrorism will continue to be with us until its root causes have been tackled? In that context, will he urge my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to impress upon the Israeli Government the importance of making progress on matters such as the Palestinian issue and attending to human rights violations during her forthcoming visit?

Mr. Renton: Yes, I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will wish those two points, particularly the carrying forward of the peace process, to be on her agenda when she meets Mr. Peres at the end of the month.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East: Is my hon. Friend sure that the three Syrians who have been removed are the correct three, or may there have been more? Secondly, is it not time to serve notice on the Syrian ambassador that in Britain men must behave as gentlemen and that if it is proposed to remove diplomatic immunity and the Embassy wishes its members to remain they should co-operate? Does he agree that, if there is to be bloodshed in the streets of Britain, Syrians who threaten Britain should be removed forthwith?

Mr. Renton: Obviously, the three for whom the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office requested the ambassador to waive diplomatic immunity were the three, and the only three, to whom the police wish to address inquiries. It was because of the refusal to waive their diplomatic immunity that they have now been asked to leave Britain by the end of the week.

The purpose behind my hon. Friend's next question was, I think, to ask what will happen if they do not leave. We have every reason to believe that the Syrian ambassador will agree to their going, but if they do not go we shall have to declare them persona non grata.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): I endorse entirely the action taken by my hon. Friend and his Department, but, nevertheless, will he tell the United States Government that, despite evidence of Syrian terrorism, it would be utterly wrong for the United States to undertake any punitive raid against Syria and that, although the Soviet Union may almost certainly have given the green light on the Libyan raid, it definitely would not do so on a Syrian raid?

Mr. Renton: I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend said, and there is no doubt that his remarks will be carefully studied and noted in Washington.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Will my hon. Friend make it clear that the actions which he has taken, of which I fully approve, are the result of a quarrel with Syria about terrorism, not a quarrel with the Arab world, and certainly not with the moderate Arab states, whose friendship we value and must take care of?

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend makes an important point which I am happy to endorse. The lesson of these incidents is that it makes it even more important that the peace process should be carried forward speedily and with the help of the moderate Arab states.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Cutlery and Stainless Steel Flatware Industry (Scientific Research Levy) (Abolition) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

LAND REGISTRATION BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That the Land Registration Bill *[Lords]* be referred to a Second Reading Committee—*[Mr. Malone.]*

North-West (Investment)

3.55 pm

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): I beg to move,

That this House, concerned at the long-term implications for public expenditure of the condition of much of the national housing stock and infrastructure, particularly in the North West region, urges Her Majesty's Government to open immediate negotiations with the construction industry with a view to encouraging greater private sector financing of inner city housing and infrastructure projects and a more effective utilisation of existing monies which Her Majesty's Government have made available through a variety of programmes designed to deal with both urban renewal and job creation.

The background of the debate is one of an accumulation of decline, not only in the lifetime of this Government or even the previous Government, but over two, three or perhaps more decades of neglect and lack of investment in our basic infrastructure. The standards of much of our housing and in many of our schools, the state of so many of our public buildings and the condition of our roads add up to a pretty sorry saga.

There is increasing public concern over these matters, as all of us know from our mailbags. Everywhere looks rather shabby. The state of the infrastructure is having a major effect on the quality of people's lives in many areas. They see for their increased rates very little improvement in the basic quality of the infrastructure in their areas.

The facts speak for themselves. The 1977 housing policy review estimated that the nation needed 300,000 new houses per year. In fact, since then there has been an average of only 200,000 starts per year — an accumulated shortfall of about 750,000 new properties. The 1981 house condition survey revealed that 4·3 million houses—about 20 per cent. of the total stock—were unfit for human habitation, lacked basic amenities or required repairs costing £2,500 or more. Moreover, the number of homes in serious disrepair had risen from 860,000 in 1976, when the previous survey was carried out, to more than 1 million.

A recent inquiry by the Department of the Environment into the local authority housing stock revealed that public housing was in an advanced state of decay. The study estimated that more than 3·8 million dwellings—84 per cent. of the stock—were considered to need expenditure totalling £18·84 billion, at an average cost of nearly £5,000 per dwelling. Nearly 40 per cent. of those properties required repairs to the basic structure and external fabric. The backlog of repairs and maintenance of local authority housing has been estimated by the Audit Commission to be growing at a rate of at least £900 million per year.

About 20 per cent. of all primary schools are housed in unmodernised buildings which are over 80 years old. One quarter of all schools have outdoor lavatories and one child in 10 is taught in temporary accommodation.

In 1983 a report by Her Majesty's inspectorate on the effects of local authority policy expenditure on education provision in England directly linked the condition of buildings to educational standards. Poor or unsuitable accommodation was considered to be adversely affecting the performance of one quarter of all the schools visited. In 1984 the position had not changed much. Her Majesty's inspectors reported:

"all in all, much of the country's school building stock is in a sorry state of repair and getting worse. Long-standing defects, allied to little sustained improvement over recent times, are

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resulting in some cases in a number of school buildings rapidly approaching the stage where repairs are impossible and new buildings may have to be provided."

The report goes on to say:

"The continued neglect of the school building stock is not only storing up potentially enormous bills for the future but is also seriously affecting the quality of work and achievement of many pupils and providing a grim environment for them and for their teachers."

The 1981 Government report "Care in Action" admitted that a significant amount of hospital care is still provided in old and outmoded buildings. Three quarters of our hospitals and health centres date from before the second world war and half from before the 1914-18 war and those buildings have not been properly maintained. The Department of Health and Social Security has recently estimated that £1·7 billion needs to be spent to bring hospitals and health centres up to a minimum acceptable standard.

Decay in the infrastructure can undermine the efficient provision of health care in many ways. A recent DHSS report on community homes showed a majority of premises to be in poor shape and general levels of comfort disturbingly low.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is it not a fact that the Government are engaged on the largest hospital building programme ever?

Mr. Thornton: Yes.

The condition of many of our roads is appalling. Frankly, many of them are dangerous. They are a classic example of the consequences of delaying required maintenance work. The average life for a road surface dressing varies between four and eight years. Failure to renew the dressing—the minimum treatment—at the right time can lead to the need for complete resurfacing at a cost per square metre some 10 times greater. If resurfacing is also delayed so that foundations are affected, the cost of restoration is a staggering 50 times that of surface dressing.

Those are the basic facts and give some indication of the scale of the problem. The implications for public expenditure in the long-term are horrendous. It is a huge post-dated cheque. It is not just work of a cosmetic nature, work for its own sake, but work that will have to be done sooner or later—and better sooner than later. It is the classic example of a stitch in time. The window which is not painted today will have to be renewed tomorrow at perhaps 10 times the cost. That is a lesson which every householder knows, and it clearly needs to be kept in mind when considering the future implications for public expenditure.

Clearly more investment is needed. The motion is not just a plea for more money, perhaps not even a plea for more money. However, I would always argue that one can spend more on infrastructure. The motion refers to negotiations with the construction industry as a matter of urgency and a need to establish a partnership with a sector of our industrial infrastructure which can achieve many of the things we all agree need to be done. We need to establish a long-term strategy on which the industry can plan.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Would the hon. Gentleman say how much more public expenditure he is calling for?

Mr. Thornton: If the hon. Gentleman listens to my remarks as I develop them, he can draw his own conclusions. I am asking for more effective use of existing moneys. That is stated clearly in the motion, which the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) clearly has not read very carefully.

I feel especially strongly about the fact that for so long we have tended to see what I call the scatter gun approach to solving some of the problems. We are throwing too little money at too many problems and significantly failing to solve them.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The hon. Gentleman said that his motion calls for the better use of existing resources. As the Conservative administration in Wirral has now lost overall control, will he make some suggestions to the incoming groups as to how they can better spend incoming resources?

Mr. Thornton: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I had the honour and pleasure of leading the Wirral authority at one stage. I should be delighted to talk to the new administration, if there is one, about the ways in which we tried to achieve what I am talking about now, to concentrate the resources we have on solving problems. I have referred to that on a number of occasions as the laser approach. It is much more effective, especially when we are trying to hold down overall levels of expenditure and when we have to recognise the fact that we cannot always allocate the huge sums of money that would be required, to concentrate those sums of money on the specific problems rather than scattering one's shot more widely.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my hon. Friend welcome the fact that in Lancaster and a number of places in the north-west private builders are coming in to take over unwanted blocks of flats and, in my city at least, are on the point of doing them up to an acceptable standard?

Mr. Thornton: The partnership that is necessary to solve many of the basic problems of decline, especially in our inner city areas, is one that I welcome. Certainly my point about the use of the laser is relevant to my hon. Friend's point.

Liverpool has hit the headlines on more than one occasion, very often for reasons which those of us who live on Merseyside deplore. Nevertheless, whatever one's feelings about Liverpool and similar cities, one cannot fail to recognise the problems that exist there, the serious nature of those problems and the fact that much money needs to be spent to solve them. However, throwing public money through local authorities is not always or even usually the best way of solving them.

In Merseyside we have seen one example of the way in which the laser can be used, whereby relatively small sums of public money were put through a Government-sponsored organisation, in this case the Merseyside Development Corporation, in order to solve a particular problem. The problem in Liverpool was the reclamation of derelict land. We have seen in the docklands of Merseyside and we are seeing in the docklands of London the way in which a development corporation of this nature can tackle a specific problem which, in many cases, local government could not tackle. I say that as one who spent a long time in local government.

In its present role, the Merseyside Development Corporation has been able to do something quite

significant and magnificent in redeveloping part of the city of Liverpool. I should like that concept to be expanded still further. Many people have said to me, particularly in the light of the recent political disturbances in Liverpool, that if only Merseyside Development Corporation could be given the task of sorting out Liverpool's housing problems, that would be a significant way forward and a significant step forward.

Merseyside Development Corporation has two advantages. First, by effective management, it bypasses much of the nonsense and political claptrap that we have heard about the problems that the council has faced. It has also shown a singular ability to attract private investment. Relatively small sums of public money used as pump priming have been used to attract private sector finance into the area of the development corporation's ambit. That needs to be expanded when we look at our basic infrastructure problems in future.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the magnificent work that the development corporation has done, but will he tell the House what the figures are? How much public and private investment has there been? Those figures are revealing.

Mr. Thornton: If I had the figures before me, I should be delighted to tell the House, but I have not. All that I know is that, apart from the land reclamation costs, which people always accepted would be high in the initial period, major dock refilling and major problems of dereliction in the docklands that had to be overcome, there has been a growing ratio of private to public pounds, particularly in the Albert dock development. I do not have the current figures in front of me, but I believe that that is likely to increase.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The hon. Gentleman was referring to the development corporation, but also attacking local councillors. Does he not appreciate that the more he attacks local democracy, the more he puts the whole of democracy at risk? It is only a short extension from his argument that one has a development corporation for local things to suggesting that it would be much more efficient to run the country in that way. Surely it is important to involve local democracy. Unfortunately, the development corporation does not do that.

Mr. Thornton: If the hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard*, he will see that the one thing I was not doing was attacking local government. I was saying that on some occasions local government had shown its inability to tackle the problem. I know from my experience what a local authority can do if it is willing to work with the private sector, and if it is prepared to recognise that its own direct labour organisation is not necessarily the best way to deal with housing policy. There is ample evidence, certainly in the example of the city of Liverpool, that the policy on housing, and particularly housing repairs, can be managed in a far better way than it has been managed for many years.

Mr. Frank Field: May I go back to the Merseyside development corporation because I should not like us to refer to it without paying tribute to Basil Bean and the effect of his talents on the whole of Merseyside? I also compliment the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), whose vision established the development corporation. People in Merseyside are now seeing the fruits of that.

The hon. Gentleman says that this is the approach that he wants because it does not lead to a substantial increase in public expenditure, but I fear that his message may be so coded that his hon. Friends on the Front Bench do not receive it clearly. Will he tell the House that Merseyside development corporation has spent about £80 million of public money? That is a sizeable sum. If people look at how it has been spent, I think that no one will dispute that it has been spent effectively. If the hon. Gentleman is calling for only minor increases of public investment of that nature, many Opposition Members will support him.

Mr. Thornton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for paying a handsome tribute to Basil Bean and his team in the development corporation because their work has been spectacular.

I am not in any way seeking to minimise the amount of money that has been spent, but a much more effective way to do so would be to concentrate it on a specific problem rather than adopt the scatter gun approach. We need to give far more attention to that. The development corporation concept has shown that it can work effectively, and it gives far better value for money in many respects than channelling the same amounts of money through local authorities.

I should like to refer to the community programme in connection with the more effective use of money and what the Government are already doing. All of us, particularly in the areas of industrial decline in the north-west, feel that the Government face the task of reducing unemployment. They have shown their commitment by the considerable amounts of money that they are putting into job creation schemes. I question whether the community programme is the right vehicle for such expenditure. I question its effectiveness in several ways. Many people feel that it is merely job substitution and that it would be better to channel the money through the construction industry properly — with adequate supervision, and proper protection for those having the work done in case the work is put in the hands of people who lack the necessary expertise.

Another aspect which is of equal, or perhaps greater, importance in the long term is the training aspect of the community programme. The industry is rightly concerned that if the millennium occurred and the Government tomorrow said that the industry could have unlimited amounts of money, in places such as Merseyside, people would not be able to respond by using the indigenous labour force because, to a large extent, the skilled people are no longer there. If they are, they are in insufficient numbers and not coming forward for retraining and the new jobs which we hope will come from the money that is to be channelled through the construction industry.

The fact is that as long as the present downturn in the construction industry continues, the more depleted the industry's skill reserves will become with the passage of time. The figures show clearly that there has been a reduction in real terms in the number of apprentices coming forward for training in the construction industry. If, as I believe will happen, there was more effective use of Government money, and if there was more work for the construction industry, which I also believe will happen, it would be a sad day for areas in the north-west if we had

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to import labour from other parts of the country to fill the jobs created in our region by such an upturn in the construction industry.

One other point connected with what the Government are doing within the present expenditure levels is the argument, waged on many occasions, between the merits of an increase in capital expenditure and taxation cuts. The Government have recognised that job creation is at the heart of their strategy. An exercise was carried out by Cambridge Econometrics which revealed a comparison that makes interesting reading. The study estimated that if one were to invest £500 million per annum on building over a five-year period, that would produce 55,000 jobs at a cost to the public sector borrowing requirement of £198 million per annum or, more effectively, £3,600 per job. The same sum, £500 million, as a stimulus in the form of tax cuts, would produce 20,000 jobs at a cost to the PSBR of £278 million per annum or £13,900 per job.

Mr. Frank Field: Would the hon. Gentleman please repeat those figures?

Mr. Thornton: The hon. Gentleman can read the figures tomorrow in *Hansard*.

Any figures can be challenged and there must be a great deal of subjective speculation as to what figures relating to tax cuts would achieve by way of stimulus. Even if one was to err on the side of generosity and knocked a substantial amount off the figure of £13,000 and increased the figure of moneys per job going through the construction industry, it is evident that a similar figure could create more jobs at a lower cost in terms of public expenditure. That is an important point which my right hon. and hon. Friends should consider.

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. Friend accept that the construction industry will flourish where private enterprise flourishes? The greatness of Manchester, Liverpool, and of all the great northern industrial cities was built on the back of private enterprise. People build factories where there are jobs and where there is enterprise. People build roads to towns that are flourishing, and they build houses where workers are in work. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that we should encourage private enterprise rather than hoist public spending?

Mr. Thornton: I agree with my hon. Friend. He is not disagreeing with the main thrust of my argument, but he has picked up a specific point that I was about to make.

Nothing I have said has been a plea for increased public expenditure. I am specifically asking the Government to examine their existing expenditure plans to see whether there might be better value for money and whether that money could be spent more effectively. I agree with my hon. Friend that only by having the right environment—and that must include a flourishing and thriving private sector—can we hope to bring about the long-term improvements to which I have referred.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): On the hon. Gentleman's point about spending, does he agree that councils should be allowed to spend an increased percentage of their capital receipts? What effect would that have? Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the present 20 per cent. restriction on capital receipts?

Mr. Thornton: I have already stated my views on that. I believe that councils should be able to spend a higher proportion of their capital receipts. We are facing such a severe problem that we can only tackle it by using capital receipts.

The motion is especially relevant to the north-west, the industrial heartland of the country, which has suffered major and dramatic decline in the past few decades. Major demographic changes have followed that decline and have resulted in poor environment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) inferred, we have seen the consequential lack of investment in the area.

We can see the effects of the decline on the environment in Manchester. They measure the size of the holes in the sewers in Manchester by the number of double-decker buses that would fit into them. We have seen the cumulative effect of the decline in the north-west. The lack of employment which has been caused by the industrial decline has led to social and economic decline.

Today's debate has given me the opportunity to draw to the Government's attention the opportunity that is staring the Government in the face. The Government and the people both want the same thing, and that is real jobs. We want not cosmetic jobs, but jobs which give skill training which will guarantee the quality of workmanship of the labour that is needed in our infrastructure. We want work that will improve the environment which we all know to be necessary. We all want to see the standards of houses, schools, hospitals and roads improved, and we want to see stability in the industry. There must be a plan which will enable the industry to plan for the future, not stop, go, stop, stop or half a pace this year and a quarter of a pace next year.

I believe that there should be a long-term project which stretches as far into the future as any of us can see. The problems of our great metropolitan areas will take decades to solve. It is already too late for some areas, but the consequences of further delay are unthinkable. It would be a devastating indictment of successive post-war Governments if Britain were to enter the 21st century still housed educated and cared for in 19th century conditions.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to adopt the spirit of the motion—few would disagree with its spirit—and to give effect to its urgency and to the real opportunity that it presents.

4.26 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Mine will be only a brief intervention in the debate, as many of my hon. Friends wish to speak. The debate is an important one for the north-west and I thank the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) for this opportunity to press the claims of a region which is crying out for more investment. This is our chance to try to convince the Mr. Bumbles at the Treasury that we must have more.

In congratulating the hon. Gentleman on his choice of subject, I also commiserate with him on the timing of the debate, which comes hot on the heels of the most devastating electoral defeat ever suffered by his party in the north-west of England. In Manchester the Conservatives were virtually eliminated as a political force in the city's affairs. Elsewhere in the north-west they suffered one spectacular rout after another. Indeed, Macclesfield is now left as the only Conservative-controlled council in the region and, as everyone on the

Conservative Benches must know, the Government's treatment of the north-west was a principal cause of last Thursday's debacle.

Regional imbalance in Britain has increased, is increasing and must urgently be diminished. For all who are prepared to listen, that is one strikingly clear message from the electorate of the north-west. There is now very little regional economic planning, nor any coherent strategy for regional development, and the north-west is among the hardest hit of the losers.

In many parts of the region, unemployment rates are more than double those of the south-east. Youth unemployment is an even bigger scandal. One of the best economic historians ever to write in the English language said of Manchester that talking about industrialisation meant talking about Manchester. Today it is not possible to talk about deindustrialisation without talking about that city. There is gross underuse of resources, mass unemployment, rampant decay and dereliction. We have male unemployment rates of over 50 per cent. in localities all over Manchester. Even more grievously, more than two-thirds of our young people go from school to scrap heap.

In a plea to the Government from Manchester last Wednesday, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) described the housing conditions of many Mancunians as "unforgiveable" and called for more determined action to close the gap between rich and poor in Britain today. He was visiting, as a repentant sinner, a city that has lost over £400 million in grants since the present Government came to power.

The hon. Member for Crosby referred to hospitals. I hope that the right hon. Member for Henley was told in Manchester that our hospitals are also in deep crisis. While DHSS Ministers pat themselves on the back, Manchester hospitals are unable to admit patients who are seriously ill because of swingeing cuts in their budgets and further ward closures.

Ministers can talk until they are blue in the face about pouring more money into the NHS, but doctors in my constituency complain angrily of the closure of their local hospital to all admissions on several occasions this year and of 11 heart attack patients who had to be turned away from Wythenshawe hospital in a single month. While he was in the city, the right hon. Member for Henley ought also to have been informed that Manchester university, in the words of the vice-chancellor, now faces "academic bankruptcy" in consequence of the Government's proposed cuts in funding over the next four years.

"What's good for the south-east is good for Britain" is what many people in the north-west see as the central theme of the Government's policies. They are sick to the teeth of the creeping south-easternisation of this country. They reject the argument that, as the south-east depended a century ago on the industrial might of the north-west, so now the north-west needs the wealth and growing tax base of the south-east.

We are told that "overheating" of the south-east's economy helps to fund investment for a more modern industrial environment in the north-west. That is not true; it does not. Fewer resources than ever before are being applied to rebuilding the most stricken parts of the north-west. In fact, taxpayers there are made to "featherbed" the south-east by supporting commuter services, by paying for London to have more than its fair share of infrastucture investment and by paying for London-weighted salaries. To give just one more example, 40 per cent. of mortgage tax relief goes to the 31 per cent. of householders in the south-east.

There is an overwhelming case for a statement from the Government on how they intend to correct regional disparities in terms both of economic and social conditions. They must recognise that a solution to the problems of the north-west requires more than a regional policy can provide. The impact of such investment decisions as the proposed massive development of Stansted airport and the Channel fixed link, and indeed the effect of main expenditure programmes of Government Departments, are of the first importance. So also are the main spending decisions of the nationalised industries and major private sector investments.

If we are to stop cramming more industry and housing into the south-east — to the further detriment of the north-west and other regions—every policy decision that affects economic activity must be reviewed to ensure that the regional dimension is fully considered. There should be a statutory requirement for a regional impact analysis of every major new investment project and, more especially, of all main spending programmes of Government Departments. We must also have policies for our airports and tourism that take proper account of regional disparities. In particular, there must be an absolute limit of 7 to 8 million passengers per annum on Stansted and the total elimination of cross-subsidy at that airport.

We on the Opposition Benches are not the only strong critics of the shambles that now passes for an airports policy. Listen, for example, to the judgment of the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), an acknowledged specialist in that field, in a debate on the Airports Bill. Speaking of the Government's policy and, in particular, its effects on regional imbalance, he said:

"I believe that the policy stinks. The north of Britain is woefully economically deprived. There is a huge economic gulf between the south-east and the north. Why should people be artificially attracted to airports such as Stansted, which they do not wish to use, when the north is crying out for the jobs and infrastructural development that is associated with airports?"—[*Official Report*, 9 April 1986; Vol. 95, c. 257.]

We have a Government who have been refusing to listen not only to the electorate, but even to their most informed parliamentary supporters. I ask them now to listen and to read — and especially to read the policy initiatives called for in "State of the Regions", which the North of England Regional Consortium recently published — and then to act urgently to correct the regional disparities which have so gravely damaged the north-west of England. If they fail to do so, they will soon find out for whom the bell tolls loudest.

4.36 pm

Sir Walter Clegg (Wyre): Like the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) on initiating this debate, which is of especial concern to those of us in the north-west. My hon. Friend made some interesting comments in his introductory speech.

It can be said at the outset that the problems facing the north-west are not new. I have been a Member of this place for 20 years and we were facing the same problems 20 years ago. The problems started in the 1930s with the rundown of the textile industry. The region has suffered

[Sir Walter Clegg]

through movements of trade and because of its geographical position, which was once its strength. The problems to which my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby referred are long-standing, but he made some important comments which many of us would recognise, one of which was that so much money has been wasted, especially money in the private sector.

When I visit some of our inner cities and, to a lesser extent, the smaller towns of the north-west, I am astonished at the state of housing that was erected only 10, 15 or 20 years ago. It seems that there was a time in the 1960s and 1970s when we built cheap and built into that cheapness expenditure for the future. For example, flat roofs on schools are extremely expensive to maintain. Lancashire county council displayed the state of the school building problem and the problems of maintaining schools in Lancashire. The old Victorian schools had lasted very well, but it is heartbreaking to find that money spent in recent years has not produced value for money in the long term. Instead, it has produced buildings that are extremely expensive to maintain.

I shall give an example—a small one, perhaps—that is typical of the waste that took place. Some local authority buildings, especially some for old people, had an inexpensive electrical heating system built into the floor. Such systems were so expensive to run, however, that the residents could not afford to use the heating system that had been provided. Had there been higher capital spending and a cheaper system to provide heating, so much the better.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): I take the hon. Gentleman's point that some of the rubbish-build, system-build and package deals of the days of which he speaks were disastrous and that local authorities are now reaping the whirlwind. Does he agree that Governments of both complexions of the 1960s and 1970s altered housing subsidy with a view to high density system building, a move in which local authorities were not involved? Therefore, previous Governments have some responsibility.

Sir Walter Clegg: I am not laying all of the blame at the feet of local government — the mania seemed to sweep the whole country. Nor was it peculiar to the north-west. For the very best of reasons, men and women of good will tried to do the best for their communities but landed us with an extremely difficult inheritance in a short time.

I am attracted to the motion and the idea of bringing in private industry because private industry can build what people really want to live in better than anyone else. If we had done that rather than build some of the monstrosities that were erected, we should have been in much happier circumstances today.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): We all agree about some of the devastating buildings that went up in the 1960s, but almost all of the system-built blocks of the 1960s, certainly in the Manchester area, were built by the private sector, not the public sector.

Sir Walter Clegg: Much of the work was put out to the private sector, but presumably the plans were approved by the customer—the local authority—and the Government consented to the buildings. I am not blaming anybody; I am merely describing what has happened so that we might learn the lessons.

As usual, the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe made an interesting speech and I should like to take up some of the issues that he raised. One was Manchester airport and regional airports such as Speke and Blackpool. Any subsidy to Stansted which would affect development at Manchester would be outrageous. For reasons that I have given in the House before, we need development at Manchester. I would not go as far as to condemn the Channel tunnel, as did the right hon. Gentleman, as there is a certain geographical inevitability about it and we combat it in vain.

We can get better value for money from public money. It should be used on infrastructure, but it must be used correctly. There has been some interesting debate about whether local authorities can do their tasks properly. I started my career in local government and it is clear that the demands on it have changed. Perhaps the lack of expertise in many commercial matters contributed to present difficulties. If local government is to run commercial enterprises, more commercial expertise will be needed to replace the administrators of the past.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe also spoke about the Health Service. The resource allocation working party has affected hospitals in the south-east as well. Resources have been deployed to the north-west. The allocation of resources in the north-west has been somewhat at Manchester's expense, with funds going to authorities such as Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde, which is a poor relation of all district health authorities and has been denied for years.

I do not know whether hon. Members have heard the great shout that shifting resources to the north-west has aroused in the south-east and London. The television and local newspaper reports down here have been full of it. Any reallocation of resources will cause any Government problems.

Mr. Straw: There is a reason for people shouting about the Health Service all over the country. There have been cuts in health services in the south-east and in the north. There have been cuts in the number of staff in Blackburn and Manchester. RAWP was never designed to be an excuse for absolute cuts in the Health Service in London and the south-east. The difference between the Government and the Labour Government is that RAWP is now being used as an excuse for such cuts.

Sir Walter Clegg: I did not intend to use RAWP as an excuse. I was in on the early discussions, and it was absolutely necessary if a wrong, which had been created many years before, was to be put right. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's comments about the Government's treatment of the Health Service. He knows that there are more doctors and nurses than when we came to office. It is a demanding service. A large hospital has been built in Liverpool and the money required for such provision is immense. I envisage no end to demand. That is one of the difficult problems which will face any Government. People will always want more. We have to do the best that we can.

As a northerner, I am deeply depressed by the north-south divide which is springing up. I do not want it to happen, as it will be bad for the country. Scotland and

Wales have development agencies and perhaps we shall have to think about something along those lines for England. I saw in today's newspapers a huge advert put in by the Welsh Development Agency, trying to attract modern industry to Wales. It made me think that perhaps we have not the resources in the north-west to do the same on the required scale.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby for giving us a chance to speak for the north-west once more. His idea of involving the private sector could produce results far and away better than what we have achieved with similar expenditure before.

4.48 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I utterly agree with the hon. Member for Wyre (Sir W. Clegg) about the problem of having to deal with mistakes that were made 12 or 15 years ago. In my city and others in the north-west, putting right the system building and the massive municipal bantustans which stretch facelessly from the railway lines to the cemeteries, the spine blocks and the cluster blocks, which people have rejected, is becoming a nightmare for many local authorities. Resources will have to be made available if we are not to avoid demolition of blocks—which can be witnessed in my city at the moment—that are only 12 years old. As the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) said, the resources can come from the private as well as from the public sector.

I agree with the hon. Member for Wyre about the NHS. He referred to the new hospital in Liverpool. I am not especially beguiled by massive new schemes. Indeed, there is much to be learnt from the mistake of building great hospitals such as the one in Liverpool. It is too big to be administered properly and visitors get lost. I have received many complaints about the sheer scale of the place—not about the staff who work extremely hard or about the facilities which are extremely good. Perhaps we did not think sufficiently about what is of use to human beings and too much about what was of use to the architects and planners who have created these nightmares, be they in housing or the NHS.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) talked about regional disparities. I agree that it is no coincidence that the 100 constituencies with the lowest level of unemployment are situated in the south-east of England. We are all conscious of the sun belt that has grown up on the western side of London. That contrasts with constituencies in the north-west, where it is increasingly difficult to make democracy relevant in areas where unemployment is as high as 50 per cent., as it is in parts of my own constituency. It is extremely difficult to hold the line for democracy and democratic values when people from the extreme wings of politics—militants in particular—are able to ensnare those whom democracy has rejected or has little to offer.

That is why it is important that we debate this motion. We should all be grateful to the hon. Member for Crosby for making this time available to the House so that we can discuss these important issues. Obviously, I do not agree with everything that the hon. Gentleman said, as he will no doubt have realised from my interventions and those of hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). In particular, I am at variance with the phrase in the motion

"a more effective utilisation of existing monies"

given that no more money may be available for the public expenditure cake. There is a need for more money to be made available. However, I recognise that we can sometimes use existing resources more effectively, and I agree with the view expressed about direct labour organisations. Nevertheless, there is a desperate need for more resources.

Organisations such as the Merseyside development corporation need more public funds if they are to carry on with land reclamation schemes and the renovation of Albert dock. Although one would like to see the injection of more private funds, that has been disappointingly small compared with the public money that has been allocated to date.

The motion is lacking in that it adopts a cosmetic approach to the problem rather than getting to the heart of the difficulties faced by the north-west—a total lack of public and private resources. Only four or five weeks ago, the Government had an opportunity to do something about this, and I was disappointed that they decided to give £1 billion in tax cuts rather than making more resources available for the construction industry or for cuts in employers' national insurance contributions.

I was glad that the hon. Member for Crosby dissociated himself from that decision, and I suspect that in the future there will be even more opportunities to do so, because the Government have already indicated that a further £4 billion may be given away next year to reduce the standard rate of income tax to 25p in the pound. That should not be our chief economic objective in the context of our social priorities.

I also despair about the way in which we have given away about £30 billion in North sea oil revenue that has come into the coffers. I despair that assets amounting to £7·6 billion that have been sold off since 1979—a further £14 billion will be sold off between now and 1989—have not been reinvested in the economy. That is why I agree with what has been said about capital receipts. It is scandalous that local authorities, having sold off council houses, are not able to reinvest those resources in their local economies. I would not object so much to privatisation or to the sale of properties if the resources that were liberated were reinvested in the economy.

There is also the cost of keeping people unemployed. The Treasury now estimates that it costs £23 billion to keep people out of work. That is ludicrous when there is so much work that needs to be done.

The week before last some of us were present in Westminster abbey at the celebration service for the Domesday book—a survey carried out 900 years ago. At that time, William the Conqueror, having despoiled many parts of the north of England—and known by the epithet of "the harrier of the North"—sent his men to survey the north of England. They saw the damage that had been done and the ravages that had taken place in the north. Those incidents were carefully detailed in the Domesday book. If a similar survey were carried out today, I wonder what would be found. If surveyors were to go there now, they would find that another harrier had been at work. They would see cities that are dying, estates that are disintegrating, roads that are collapsing and homes that are decaying. They would find the people demoralised, including many disillusioned and embittered young people who are now resorting to heroin. Half of all the crime in the north of England is now committed by young people. There is bitterness, hopelessness and

[Mr. David Alton]

despair. People are short on hope, and although they are our greatest resource, they are left to lie idle on the dole queue and consequently become increasingly embittered and dejected. That resource must be matched with the need, and that is why we should invest more in things such as homes.

There is a need to spend more on improvement grants. More than 500,000 homes still do not have inside sanitation, running hot water or bathrooms. That is nonsense while 400,000 building workers are standing idle on the dole.

The same can be said of house insulation. In 1979, £35 million was spent on energy efficiency, but in 1986-87 that has been reduced to £8·3 million. Throughout the north-west there are council estates and terraced houses where the heat is going out through the roofs because of inadequate insulation. There is work to be done in that regard, and there are building workers waiting to do it.

Many empty council and private dwellings could be used for people in need. In my own city alone, more than 6,000 properties in the public sector are standing empty while people are in need of those homes. We ought to encourage co-ops, self-help groups, private enterprise and the public sector to tackle those problems. That is why, when I was housing chairman, I encouraged organisations such as Barratts to come into Liverpool and to embark on low-cost homes-for-sale schemes on derelict land in the inner city. That is why I encouraged Barratts to take over disused tenement blocks in places such as Myrtle gardens and to build low-cost flats for sale, all of which have been bought by people who now live in the heart of the inner city.

Imaginative schemes are possible, but it needs pump-priming. It is significant that, in his evidence to the Select Committee on the Environment just over a year ago, Laurie Barratt said that schemes such as Minster court and the one in Salford would not now be possible because of the additional burdens that have been placed on construction firms and the lack of Government incentives. There should, therefore, be more pump-priming and help for private enterprise which embarks on such projects.

The hon. Member for Crosby also spoke of the need to spend more on roads, sewers and schools. I agree that the conditions in some of our schools are absolutely primitive. The construction of a Mersey barrage should also commend itself to the Minister and should be supported by hon. Members. That would be a symbol of hope for the people of Merseyside in particular. It could supply one third of the electricity requirements of Merseyside as well as create thousands of construction jobs. It would create new deep sea water facilities in the mouth of the Mersey and a massive area for recreation. Private enterprise has shown an interest in such a scheme. It would cost about £222 million, but when compared with the cost of a new nuclear power station at about £2·5 billion, that is small money indeed. Like the Channel tunnel, such a scheme should commend itself to the Government, and I hope that they will consider it seriously.

We cannot dodge the fact that more resources are needed. There is no point in robbing Peter to pay Paul. There is a desperate need for more resources in the public sector as well as pump-priming to encourage the private sector. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Crosby for drawing our attention to these important matters and concentrating our minds on the enormous problems facing the north-west.

4.59 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) on his success in the ballot and commend him for his choice of subject.

It is a matter of regret that we can spend many hours each Session in the House discussing the problems of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, yet we must win a raffle to get three hours to talk about the problems in the north-west. I shall spend a few minutes of that valuable time dealing with the housing problems that we face in the north-west.

The housing problems of Hyndburn are typical of many areas in the north-west. Sixty per cent. of our houses were built before 1914 and most were built before 1890. Eighty per cent. are owner-occupied, 41 per cent., or 11,000 properties, would qualify for repair or intermediate grant, and 10 per cent. have no fixed bath or inside toilet. It is a depressing position.

The Government are to be congratulated on recognising our problem and increasing our HIP allocation. Last year, Hyndburn borough council spent £1·8 million on improvement grants — eight times as much as in 1978-79, when it spent £233,000. At present levels of expenditure it will be 30 years before each owner-occupied household can expect to enjoy basic amenities in a property free from major defects. Although we are grateful for that increase in allocation, it is still not enough. We are worried that it may be reduced, which would be economic madness.

Either we improve our present substandard housing and keep it in the private sector, or we allow it to deteriorate still further so that, eventually, it must be demolished and replaced by council houses at six or seven times the cost of an improvement grant. That invariably means that the householder is rehoused in an area where he does not want to live in a house he cannot afford, and that, subsequently, he needs and receives further subsidy from the public purse. Given that the Government are committed to reducing public expenditure and increasing owner-occupation, I fail to see how that latter course of action can help to achieve either.

The way forward must be through an increase in spending on home improvement grants. That being so, I ask the Government to increase their support for the neighbourhood revitalisation service scheme. It presents them with an obvious opportunity to help. It was set up and designed to tackle the problem of encouraging local authorities and the private sector to work together in their own interests and in an organised way. Basically the scheme is committed to an assault on some of our rundown housing areas, each comprising 2,000 to 3,000 houses, through fostering community programmes, based on making the most effective use of limited public resources and maximising private funding.

The four pilot schemes in Sheffield, Oldham, Bedford and Gloucester have been most successful, and areas in the north-west would benefit greatly from the extension of the scheme. The initiative is now at a crossroads: either it can tick over as an interesting applied research project or it can be developed rapidly to 150 or more schemes at a modest budget of £6 million. From experience of the pilot

schemes, it seems that a ratio of 1 : 3 of public to private sector money would be generated over four years. A modest start of a constant 25 projects would require new funding of just over £1 million. That would generate £25 million of HIP allocation and £75 million of private sector investment. It would create 1,084 jobs on site and 360 jobs in factories producing building materials. At £759 a year per job it must be a bargain. It must be the answer to our two major problems — housing and unemployment. Those problems are so massive that the Government and local authorities alone cannot deal with them. The public sector, the private sector and individuals must all work together to solve them.

The north-west, with so much substandard housing, would be a major beneficiary of an extension of the NRSS. I welcome the fact that even a small increase in funding would enable a scheme in Hyndburn to go ahead. The benefits of an extended NRSS are enormous in terms of reducing unemployment, providing decent housing and generally giving a boost to areas such as the north-west. It is an efficient, effective way of spreading scarce resources. I urge the Government to seize this opportunity to provide the small amount of extra funds necessary to allow a minimum of 25 new schemes a year to go ahead. By doing so, they would demonstrate that they continue to recognise the problems of the north-west and that they are prepared to deal with them.

5.6 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): I, too, welcome this opportunity to debate the motion, and congratulate the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) on moving it.

Obviously, hon. Members from all three sides of the political spectrum will raise their voices today in favour of the development and well-being of the north-west. We have raised our voices many times in the Chamber. Only a couple of weeks ago Lord Dean of Beswick raised his in the other place. The chambers of commerce, the chambers of trade and the trade union movement have raised theirs. We have all spoken about the decline of textiles, engineering, chemicals and paper manufacturing in the north-west.

The trade unions, in their 1986 Budget submission, made a number of interesting points for an improved regional industrial policy. They called for a restoration of the money removed by the savage cuts in the regional industrial budget, which had nearly halved the programme since 1979. The north-west has lost about £50 million a year as a result. Those resources should have been used to support companies coming to and expanding in the north-west. I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman that that can be done without any financial investment. He wants something on the cheap, but unless we can bend the Government's ear and unless financial resources are invested in the region, we are wasting our breath, as we have done in previous debates.

One of the main planks of infrastructure investment is the reconstruction programmes. The trade union movement proposed a £290 million programme of investment in houses, roads, schools and hospital building in the north-west. All hon. Members know of the housing waiting lists from the great numbers of people who attend their regular advice bureaux. The housing waiting lists have increased by about 40 per cent. since 1979, and the backlog of repair work is reaching crisis proportions.

We have some heavily used motorways and trunk roads, all of which require a great deal of maintenance, and replacing and renovating such infrastructure would assist the north-west. As a Member of Parliament representing the inner city of Manchester, I do not need to be told about the number of road collapses that occur. It is sometimes said that one needs a helicopter to get across Manchester because the roads are collapsing as a result of worn-out Victorian sewers. These are massive problems. Hon. Members have talked about the school and hospital buildings that are outmoded and inadequate. A reconstruction programme would, in addition to improving the attractiveness of the region, create about 60,000 jobs.

Most of the infrastructure changes would help to rebuild public services. We need to rebuild our public services, particularly increasing expenditure on education and health services. About £180 million needs to be spent in these sectors. We are talking about real money because this cannot be done on the cheap. The TUC budget package, if implemented, would give a £900 million boost to the regional economy and would create about 30,000 jobs in the first year and up to 90,000 jobs over the next four years.

The inner city of Manchester has tremendous housing problems, for the reasons set out by the hon. Member for Crosby. Governments of both political parties changed the subsidy on housing and invited local authorities to build high density tower blocks and provide system-built package deal housing, the problems of which we now have to face. Some of these "highways in the skies" have been built for only 10 years, yet the bulldozers are being moved in to demolish them. One can never assess the social deprivation caused in those years.

In housing we do not need speculators' dreams of system-built housing, but brick-and-mortar traditional housing with gardens—the homes that people desire. In the north-west over 92,000 households are overcrowded, over 131,000 dwellings lack basic amenities such as a fixed bath or an internal WC and 388,000 dwellings require major expenditure. At this rate, it could be more than 20 years before enough houses are built to meet current needs alone. Moreover, the current efforts on improvement are equal to less than 7 per cent. of demand. The number of dwellings falling into the unfit category now outstrip new build and renovation.

We all know that the motorway system is bad. Anybody who drives to and from Manchester, as I do, will know how many road repairs are being carried out in the north-west, and a great deal more needs to be spent on this. We have been calling for railway electrification for the north-west, but so far the Government have not agreed to allow this. We also need a rail link to Manchester airport. Stansted airport has already made its rail proposals, which have been accepted. We had to have a debate in the House to stop that Stansted line from going ahead because Manchester is still waiting. If the Government would give us the go-ahead on the Manchester rail link, we should have no objection to Stansted. However, the drift to the south-east means that Stansted will get heavy and hidden subsidies, which will be to the detriment of Manchester.

We are still waiting for the rapid line transport system in Greater Manchester, and I hope that, when the opportunity comes, I shall be able to introduce a Bill to bring fast modern tram cars into the centre of Manchester.

[Mr. Robert Litherland]

These are all exciting ideas. The will is there. We require the resources to carry out such plans.

A great deal of attention has been paid to derelict land. In the north-west we have about 10,000 hectares of treatable derelict land, and this is about 29 per cent. of the total for England as a whole. North-west local authorities have put in bids totalling £70 million for derelict land grants, but the most optimistic reply, from the Department of the Environment, is that only £5 million will be available in any one year. That would merely scratch the surface.

Almost every day I see derelict sites in my constituency. For example, in 1978, in just one section of Manchester — the north-east — manufacturing employment accounted for 63 per cent. of all jobs. Since that date, the job losses in manufacturing industry there have been dramatic. Between 1979 and 1983, at least 12 firms employing more than 100 people closed. These include international names such as Laurence Scott Engineering, Richard Johnson and Nephew — which had celebrated 200 years in existence and which was the finest manufacturer of wire in the world. They have closed, and closed for good. Some 350 jobs have gone at Easicut Tools, and Walden and Makin have lost 270 jobs. Now, GEC Switchgear, a company that is supposed to be the epitome of all that is good in profit-making, will lose 300 jobs before the end of the year. Last week I heard that Manchester Steel, the last steel mill, was closing for good. This is not like the 1930s. These firms are closing for ever, leaving empty monuments to the past. These are vandalised, which leads to dereliction, and the local authorities have to pick up the pieces. That happens regularly in inner city areas such as Manchester.

The environmental consequences of these changes can be seen in vacant and unused land and buildings. One quarter of the industrial land in the east of Manchester is vacant. The Manchester city council, through its initiatives, has tried to take steps to remedy the problem. It has spent about £8 million in acquiring land and buildings to carry out demolition, but if this is to happen and new buildings and businesses are to be enticed into the area, more finance and resourcing from central Government is needed.

The city council has pressed the case for funds to be provided on a regular programme basis and we are arguing that £10 million is needed over the next three years to carry out reclamation of derelict land building. The Government should be committed to Britain's industrial future—one that would support industry and its workers as other countries do. It has frequently been pointed out by trade and commerce that we are not comparing like with like. In other countries industry is subsidised and is getting favourable interest arrangements. As a result, we cannot compete. The Government must listen to the voices from both sides of the north-west today. We are asking for some action.

5.19 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Recently the lease on my house in London came to an end, and I went to docklands to see whether I could afford a house there. It was the first time that I had visited London's docklands, and I found acre upon acre of dereliction. I have read in the newspapers and heard in the House of the good work that is going on in docklands, and no doubt it is; but it will take decades to solve that problem. Anyone who walked through even half of the area would realise that. When I saw the problems that exist there, even though the City of London, with all its wealth, is only two or three miles away, I realised how great the problem is north of the Wash.

I have lived in the north all my life. I was born there, brought up there and worked there, and I know the north well. Docklands is a minuscule problem compared with the problem in the north. If we in the north-west, or the north-east, expect the taxpayers of London and the south-east to come galloping to our rescue and solve our problems overnight, we have another think coming. When Labour Members continually bleat and say, "As long as we get grants, or a little more money from Westminster, our problems will be solved", they do the north a disservice, and the sooner they realise it, the better.

We must remember that the greatness of the north was built on private enterprise. Liverpool's greatness was built by the people of Liverpool, not by the people of London, Southampton or Brighton. It was built through the sweat, labour and hard work of the people of Liverpool. The same applies to Manchester, Sheffield and Newcastle. If we continue to kid our people that Government grants will solve the problems, we shall do them a great disservice. It is a lie, and Labour Members know it.

We must encourage private enterprise, which is what we are doing in Stockport. Our unemployment is less than 10 per cent. Stockport is in the north-west and has suffered the same problems as everyone else, but we have encouraged enterprise, and it works. Unemployment is less than the national average; it is far less than the average in the north-west. We have no enterprise zone and we receive no grants. The only way in which we shall solve the north-west's problems is by the hard work of the people who live there. We cannot rely on the help of the hard-pressed taxpayers in the south-east; and they are hard-pressed, with mortgages of £40,000, £50,000 or £60,000 for houses that they could buy much more cheaply in the north-west.

5.22 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): This is one of the rare occasions when we can make a few comments about the north-west. The great pity is that this is a short debate and we must be brief.

Some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) were offensive to some residents in the north-west. The people of the north-west are not asking for handouts from the southern counties. They are asking for their just entitlement from the Government. The Labour party believes that the Government should spend money in our areas to the same extent as they invest it in the south. The money that is invested in the south does not belong only to southerners. It comes from the taxpayers of Britain. For that reason, we are making a just demand on the Government and saying that we are entitled to a share of the money. We have not received our share and that is why one speaker after another, including Conservative Members, have made similar demands.

The north-west has made probably one of the biggest contributions to the welfare of Britain since the industrial revolution. Its contribution is beyond comparison with that of any southern county. The north, including the north-east, brought all the greatness to Britain. It was not the

southern counties. It is about time to dispel some of the stories being told, including those of the hon. Member for Stockport. Nowadays, we receive nothing like the amount of money to which we are entitled.

There has been massive investment in airports, but not in the north-west. The great success of Manchester airport has been due to the tenacity, ingenuity and courage of the people in the Manchester area in supporting their airport with their money. We have never received handouts, as has been implied. That is why we object to money being invested in places such as Stansted. We hear that the Government will invest thousands of millions of pounds in the new Channel link, which will not create a single job after construction is completed. It will merely siphon off more jobs and expenditure to the south, leaving a desert in the north-west and the north-east of England.

Matters became even worse after 1979. I clearly remember hearing the present Secretary of State for Education and Science, when he was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, say that he would remove industrial development area status from many of the areas represented by hon. Members in the Chamber today. He removed industrial development area status from Manchester, which meant that no grants were available. Company after company was induced to move to other towns and leave established factories because they could obtain grants in those other areas. About two years ago, the Government had to relent, change their policy and reintroduce industrial development area status.

The people of the north-west have always been pioneers, and I resent anyone saying that the people of Manchester and Liverpool are lazy and want only handouts. That is not the case. The pioneers who built the Manchester ship canal, Manchester airport and other developments were second to none.

Mr. Alfred Morris: And Trafford park.

Mr. Eastham: I shall discuss Trafford park in a moment.

The Government have some responsibilities that they cannot avoid. It is not fair to tell the people of the north-west, "You must do it yourselves." Communications are the Government's responsibility, and Government money should be spent on them. We do not receive the money to which we are entitled. Speaker after speaker today has drawn attention to Manchester airport and the just demands for the railway spur. It is incredible to hear the Government talk about a possible rail link for Stansted. We do not even know whether it will be a success. Yet the Government have been procrastinating for years about the decision to encourage the railway authorities to invest the money.

Mr. Favell: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we all have the future and prosperity of everyone in the north-west at heart? Should we not emphasise what the north-west has to offer? We have the finest motorway network in the country; we should tell people about it. We have the finest airport outside London; we should tell people about it. We have good, cheap houses; we should tell people about them. If people need to modernise their houses, the building societies would be only too pleased to lend them the money to do so.

Mr. Eastham: That is precisely what I have been saying. We are the people who pioneered Manchester airport. Depite having a rotten Government, we have spent money on priorities such as communications. We object to massive sums of money being pumped down south, where the people have not been working any harder than those in the north. That is a legitimate complaint to make against the Government.

Trafford park is dear to me. I worked there for several years as a planning engineer, when GEC alone employed 25,000 workers. Now only 12,000 workers are employed in the whole estate. Yet in one way or another Trafford park affects 500,000 people. It was one of the first industrial estates in the world to be built and was created not by the Government or by those in the south but by the people of the north-west.

It is a fact of life that there has been a decline in our traditional manufacturing industry. We in the north-west recognise that and know that it is not the result of neglect. Industrial trends have changed. Microtechnology was unknown before the war. But that does not mean that the people of the north-west should not have a share in some of the new industries. During the past two years no fewer than 25,000 jobs have been lost in Trafford park. But all is not lost. There are many opportunities, if only the Government would take them. The north-west has a skilled labour force. I marvel when people say that there is a serious shortage of skilled labour in the south, because in the north-west skilled men and women work as attendants in hospitals, or in parks. They could be doing magnificent, highly skilled work.

The north-west has an excellent road network. Land is immediately available, so there is no need to waste time. We can make quick decisions. The infrastructure already exists in Trafford park. Gas and electricity are already laid on and everything is there waiting, yet we do not get the Government assistance that we need.

We have some of the best education facilities in the world, let alone in England. People are sent to Manchester university or Manchester polytechnic because those institutions are the home of high technology. Much of the technology in computers and the chip came from the north-west. Yet to the Government's shame, the north-west has never shared in the prosperity to which it is entitled.

Local authorities can deal with many of the problems, but the Government must first help. They must encourage investment in the north-west, and must give more urban development grants. The Minister may refer to Trafford park's great potential at the end of the debate. I know that he has been there. But Ministers tend to go to Trafford park, say that it has great potential and that they will do something, and then go away and do nothing. It is not only politicians but industrialists who are dissatisfied. They, too, say that something must be done. It is not good enough for Ministers to come along, say that they will look into the matter and then go away never to be seen again. Another Minister then comes and goes through the same rigmarole. He has a walk round Manchester and the industrial estates and then goes away and does nothing.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): While the Minister was there, he might see 6,000 empty houses and flats. The hon. Gentleman was talking about quick decisions. Does he not think that Manchester city council should make a few quick decisions, and follow the example of Bolton council, which has used Government money in co-operation with private developers to clear up such problems?

Mr. Eastham: I do not mind dealing with housing, and if time permits I may come to that. Sometimes decisions cannot be quick, because we are talking about years of neglect. The Conservative party has been in office since 1979, so we are not asking for a quick decision when we tell the Government to get off their bottoms, get up north and do something about it. They should get on with the job for which they were elected.

I was in local government for a good number of years, and know that the legacy of old Victorian schools meant that people were desperate to build new schools. But all Governments said that that would cost too much. Consequently, authorities could not build schools with the pitched roofs that they wanted. The Government would only allow so many thousands of pounds for building a primary school. It was not a question of people not realising the problems involved with flat roofs; it was merely a question of money. Perhaps that answers some of the points made about schools.

Housing is a very sensitive area. I remember scores of debates on housing and its problems. Contrary to what the hon Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) said, properties are vacant not because of local authority neglect but because of the massive cuts made by the Government which have affected home improvements. Massive modernisation schemes were stopped in their tracks after tenants had already been moved out because there was a stop on the money. Does the hon. Gentleman think we should have moved those people back in even though the property may have needed a new roof or have had defective electrics that could have been a fire hazard? The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East spoke about 6,000 houses, but there are 110,000 council houses in Manchester. It is thus understandable that some of them will need maintenance. I hope that answers some of his cheap points.

Only last week I received a letter from the managing director of Wilson's brewery saying that he was sorry to advise me that nearly 300 jobs would be lost in July. He said that there would be redundancy pay and so on. But people do not want that; they want jobs. As long as this Government remain in office, people know that they will not get another job——

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Rubbish.

Mr. Eastham: If the hon. Gentleman would care to stand on his feet, I will deal with him. It is not rubbish for me to tell Conservative Members that there are now nearly 4 million unemployed. Do they call that rubbish?

Mr. Hind: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in the past 12 months the workforce has increased by nearly 1 million, from 23 million to 24 million? That has happened despite the fact that the number of school leavers has increased greatly due to the earlier birth bulge, and has outnumbered those retiring. Is he further aware that once the birth bulge is reversed the unemployment trend will reverse and begin to fall? Many people have accepted their responsibilities and have said to themselves "I will get myself a job." They have gone out and got one. Does the hon. Gentleman not realise that his sort of defeatist talk gives the north-west a bad name?

Mr. Eastham: The hon. Gentleman cannot expect 4 million people to jump on bikes and find jobs in another area. The hon. Gentleman is deceiving himself if he believes that more jobs have been created. If he analysed the Department's figures, he would find that many of the jobs to which he referred are part-time jobs. The full-time jobs are going. The part-time jobs tend to be the worst jobs and the lowest paid. People cannot even survive on such low wages. That is what the Government are aiming for.

Wilson's brewery told me that nearly 300 of my constituents will be out of a job in July. In its letter to me, the brewery said that it is an old plant and it is to move to a more modern plant in another town. That decision had nothing to do with the work force. It was not taken because of any neglect on their part. No investment has been made in the brewery. The workers, through no fault of their own, are losing their jobs. The Government ought to spend more money on refurbishment and modernisation in industry to keep jobs.

Mr. Favell: Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House why Wilson's brewery is investing in a town other than Manchester?

Mr. Eastham: I will not go into the mechanics of Wilson's brewery. Wilson's brewery owns a chain of pubs in Manchester and makes much of its profit as a result of people drinking Wilson's beer. When Wilson's closes down, there will be a few hundred fewer people spending money in its pubs. If the people of Manchester were to boycott Wilson's brewery and say, "If you cannot invest in Manchester, we will not buy your beer", it might reconsider its position.

High unemployment places many burdens on local government. It is unfair that local government must make provision for social services and so on because people are unemployed. The Government's philosophy is that of low pay for workers, not giving workers a fair deal, and attacking fair wages. Hon. Members will see examples of this in the debate on the Wages Bill on Wednesday and Thursday this week.

The Government have imposed massive increases in transport costs. That has placed another burden on the low paid, because many of them do not own cars. Those who rent council properties have been faced with fantastic increases as a direct result of Government policies.

The north-west is right to remind the Government, as it did in last Thursday's election, that citizens will not forget the dismal policies and failure of the Government during the past seven years. I am sure that the Government will be swept out of office at the general election.

5.43 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) for giving the House an opportunity to consider the problems of the north-west. I ask the House to consider the Opposition's view of those problems. Let us not forget that many of the problems inherited by the Government in 1979 were the direct result of the economic disaster that was foisted upon us in 1976 by the Labour party, which went to the International Monetary Fund, borrowed money left, right and centre, and slashed capital programmes completely.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Especially hospitals.

Mr. Hind: Especially hospitals. An amount of £1 billion was slashed off the hospital building programme, and the public have a right to know. Those problems were inherited by the Government in 1979. The Government

had not only to pay back the money that was borrowed and rectify the economic disaster but to restore the capital programmes that had been vastly reduced by the Labour Government. It ill becomes Labour Members to complain and whine about the state of the north-west when they have blood on their hands regarding the problems that face us today.

I am proud of the north-west and the part that my constituents play in it. It is worth taking a few minutes to put before the House some of the successes in the north-west — for example, private housing. In the whole country, in the third quarter of 1985, new orders for housing were 11 per cent. up, and 21 per cent. up on the same period in 1984. The figure was 15 per cent. up on 1981. In 1985, £27·8 billion was allocated for private housing construction—the highest level since 1981. The Government's policy is that, if possible, every person should be given the opportunity to own his own house. I am pleased to say that 63 per cent. of the people in this country have taken the opportunity to do so. Well over 1,500,000 have purchased their houses from local authorities under the right-to-buy programme.

Nobody denies that there is a shortage of housing. It is a problem which we should be tackling, but there are successes in the private housing sector. The north-west is an example. The north-west is doing much better under the Conservative Government than it ever did under the Labour Government.

The north-west has probably one of the most ambitious hospital building programmes ever seen in this country. A sum of £600 million is to be spent over 10 years. Hospitals are to be built in almost every major centre in Lancashire and the north-west. In December 1988, a £19 million programme will commence for phase one of a new hospital in my constituency, followed by a further £16 million three years later. There will be a new hospital in 1994 at Skelmersdale, at a cost of £3·5 million. My constituency is not an exception. Other north-west areas are in a similar position.

Those who complain about hospital wards closing down forget that the Warnock report showed that we should close down the Victorian asylums, which we politely call mental hospitals, and move the mentally and physically handicapped into the community. That has taken place, ending many of those old hospitals. We must remember that when a new hospital is built, an old one tends to close down, because the facilities in the new hospital are much better.

Manchester airport has been mentioned. There is only one airport outside London which is classed as an international gateway. The White Paper contains a proposal to build a rail link between Manchester and the airport. The Government made a commitment to that. A working party has been established to consider a rail link. The airport terminal was recently refurbished. Six million passengers will go through the airport this year. It is projected that the figure will rise to 13 million passengers in five years. The White Paper also contains a proposal for a new second terminal at Manchester airport. The runway has been extended. Some hon. Members were not fully supportive of the Airports Bill because it was felt that it could go further. The Government said that they would not tolerate cross-subsidisation between London airports in order to give Manchester airport a proper chance.

Mr. Litherland: The hon. Gentleman is talking rubbish.

Mr. Hind: This is a Conservative achievement. Labour Members are naturally cynical about it and would never give it the benefit of the doubt.

Mr. Eastham *rose*——

Mr. Hind: The first railway line to be electrified between major centres in the north and Euston, London, was the north-western line. That line is electrified all the way while the north-eastern line people are still fighting for electrification.

Mr. Straw: They are not fighting for it. It is happening.

Mr. Hind: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I appreciate that comment.

The motorway network in the north-west is probably the finest in Britain. Our colleagues in the south-east complain that we have more motorways than they ever dreamt of. Our motorway network planning has been imaginative. My constituency is on a motorway T, on the M58 and the M6.

If we abolished the dock labour scheme in Liverpool —I hope that will happen in the next few years—the port of Liverpool would be more competitive and would advance ahead of the non-dock labour scheme ports in the south-east.

I heard the comments of the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) about the loss of jobs. To what extent is that caused by Labour-controlled authorities overcharging on the rates? Last year, industry spent as much in rates as it did in corporation tax. That is the size of the overheads faced by business. To improve competitiveness and achieve tight worldwide competition, industry must have lower costs. That is why some Conservative-controlled council areas are benefiting from industries which have moved from places such as Liverpool to areas in west Lancashire which have well-controlled, well-run Conservative councils that keep the rates down. That is a fact of life, and those who complain must look at what they are doing.

The Government have led the field in the north-west in the enterprise agency movement. It was pioneered in St. Helens and Rossendale. Rossendale was so successful that it lost its assisted area status.

We must consider the north-west as a whole. How many constituencies there do not qualify for Government grants, for industrial selective assistance and regional development grant? My constituency, except for two parishes, is a fully assisted area. In the financial year 1984-85, we received £3·5 million in regional development grant alone to create new jobs, to build our factories and to improve the infrastructure.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that Bury, which had long suffered from not having such assistance, was granted it two years ago? Is he further aware that recently one of the leading companies and the largest employer in the Radcliffe part of my constituency, the East Lancashire Papermill Company, announced a £20 million development programme? Do not such actions, for which the Government rightly take credit, help to reduce unemployment in the north-west?

Mr. Hind: I agree with my hon. Friend.

[Mr. Hind]

That is not the end of it. I have said that there have been major successes in the north-west, but we should consider some of the problems. Like my colleagues, I shall not say that everything in the garden is rosy. There is a strong argument on the industrial side for having a north-west development agency similar to the development agencies in Wales and Scotland. Many of my colleagues must object to the advertisements on Granada Television showing the sun coming up over the Welsh mountains with a Welsh choir singing. It must stick in their throats to know that such advertisements are showing the competition faced by the north-west in attracting new regional industries. Perhaps we should do the same and repeat the successes of the Welsh Development Agency on Deeside in south Wales and of the Scottish Development Agency in silicon valley in north-east Scotland.

About 47 per cent. of schools in Lancashire are church schools and 35 per cent. of our pupils attend them. There is a strong argument for providing more money for new projects and to improve those schools. There is an argument also for improving those schools controlled directly by the Lancashire education authority — for example, by alleviating the flat roof problem which occurs in schools throughout Britain. Recently, an all-party delegation comprising hon. Members from both sides of the House — including the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) and me — saw my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to argue the case for the north-west, especially Lancashire. There is no doubt that greater infrastructure spending is needed for the north-west.

Despite the problems, there have been improvements — for example, in housing and schools. What is the answer? It comes down to the economic argument. It is no good following the path that the Opposition want to take. Their proposed fresh public expenditure of £24 billion — an increase of more than a sixth — would lead to an additional 5p or 6p in the pound on income tax. That would destroy jobs and everything else that is being done and would create inflation beyond our wildest dreams. There are alternatives.

It boils down to an argument which is taking place in the Conservative party between infrastructure spending and tax relief—between spending the £3·5 billion or £4 billion which may be available next year and giving it out in tax relief. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will bear in mind hon. Members' comments. The problem, especially in the north-west, is unemployment. Increased infrastructure spending will help us to tackle it. In some communities, including Skelmersdale in my constituency, there are estates with 40 per cent. male unemployment where people have little skill except in the building trade. I believe that there are about 800,000 building operatives in Britain without jobs. Those people will be assisted by infrastructure spending on housing and home improvement grants, road maintenance, school maintenance and public building maintenance as a whole where the work is labour intensive. Such spending will attack the unemployment problem and assist us to improve our infrastructure.

It is no good the Opposition complaining about the reduction in housing improvement grants. Under the Labour Government, those grants were well below £100 million. Since then, they have increased by well over seven times.

The north-west cries out for improvements in capital spending. The Government must balance the needs of the economy. They must look at the books and consider what we can afford. Perhaps in future, as the economy grows, as it has done in the past six years——

Mr. Straw: Ha, ha!

Mr. Hind: The hon. Gentleman laughs. He does not want to hear that the economy is doing well. He wants the unemployed as a massive army to vote Labour so that he can tell them how badly off they are and say, "Do not worry, chaps, we shall put it right, just like we did in 1976." But we all remember the IMF. That is not the answer. Infrastructure spending will have an important role to play as the British economy develops further under a Conservative Government.

6 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) is wrong on so many counts that it is difficult to know where to begin. However, let me tell him about spending on hospitals. His hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) has been beating a path to the door of the Secretary of State for Social Services on many occasions in recent months because he refused to honour the promise to build the Altrincham hospital in the borough of Trafford. That failure affects my constituents. Furthermore, his hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) has joined Labour Members in trying to ensure that British Rail and the Department of Transport do something about the rail link to Manchester airport. Despite their White Paper, this Government are notorious for not honouring their promises. They have not yet delivered on that promise.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West referred to the Government's success in the public sector. He referred to the success of British Rail's electrification programme and to the success of the local authority-owned Manchester airport. Opposition Members agree with him about that, but in the north-west the private sector has failed abysmally to honour its part of the bargain.

My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) referred to the problems at Trafford park. I intend to refer to Trafford park, too, because the hon. Member for Lancashire, West referred to the success of the private sector in Conservative-controlled authorities where there are low rates. The borough of Trafford claims to have one of the lowest rates in the north-west. For many years it has been a Conservative-controlled and extremely doctrinaire authority, and Trafford park has lost more jobs than have been lost in any other borough in the north-west. The hon. Member for Lancashire, West shakes his head, but he does not know the true position.

I could read out a list of companies that were once great manufacturing companies. I could refer to companies, such as the General Electric Company, that have shed thousands of jobs under this Government. Greengate Cable has just laid off nearly 300 workers in my constituency. I could also tell the hon. Gentleman about companies such as Ingersoll Rand that have laid off employees and closed factories in Trafford park because

it has been impossible under this Government to sustain manufacturing investment. The result of the Government's failure to invest in the infrastructure in that area is that it has been impossible to persuade industry to reinvest there. It has been impossible to get the Arnold Weinstocks of this country to reinvest in Manchester when they can reinvest more successfully in other parts of the country. Who would come to Trafford park when it is in such a poor condition?

The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment has visited Trafford park. He is one of the few Ministers who has made it to the north of England, and that is possibly why he has been asked to reply to this debate. The Minister has intimate local connections with the north-west and he is one of the few Ministers who has listened to the arguments. But a Secretary of State ought to be responding to this debate. This job should not have been fobbed off on an Under-Secretary of State, who is always dragged out to respond to debates of this kind. A Secretary of State who knows about industry in the north-west and about the need for investment in the industrial infrastructure of the region should have replied to this debate. However, a Secretary of State is not to respond to the debate, which means, sad to say, that it is a downgraded type of debate. But that is what the north-west deserves, according to this Government's priorities.

Conservative Members have bleated about the role of the private sector. What is the role of the private sector in housing? Several blocks of flats in my constituency have been sold off to the private sector for improvement. Improvement is badly needed, but the local authority was forced by this Government's policies to sell off those blocks of flats. The local authority would have preferred to improve those properties, but it did not have the money with which to do so. Their sale means that many of my constituents, with massive housing problems, will be unable to be housed by the local authority for many years. In one case, eight adults are sharing a small terraced house. One of the young couples in that extended family has no chance of being offered a house in Trafford because, as an authority, Trafford has failed abysmally in its responsibilities.

Trafford's policy of flogging off council property to the private sector means that the waiting list will not get shorter. The reality is that those with money will continue to have access to private sector housing in Britain. However, there is no hope for would-be council tenants. There will continue to be overcrowding and ever-lengthening housing waiting lists.

I should like the Minister to tell me why the northern regions, with their massive housing problems, have received less money from the housing investment programme during the last two years. Why has the housing investment programme allocation of the southern region and London been increased? The northern regions, with their massive housing problems, have suffered from this policy. What have Conservative Members been doing about this? The north-west region has been one of the biggest losers. Its housing investment programme allocation has been reduced from 15·7 per cent. to 14·6 per cent. What have Conservative Members done to ensure that the north-west receives its proper allocation?

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Nothing.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend says, "Nothing" and of course he is right. The north is faced with massive housing and transport problems because of disinvestment by the private sector. It has moved its investment to the south-east. The amount of money that has been made available by the Government is irrelevant to the problems that face the northern regions. Voters may be attracted by the idea of fine tuning, of a subtle change in public and private sector investment and of a more efficient use of public money, but that will not solve the problems of the north-west. It will not solve the problems of the thousands of families who need to be housed. It will do nothing to create jobs for the thousands of people who are unemployed. It will do nothing to create the infrastructure that is urgently needed.

The work force in the north-west has great talent and great skills, but there is a leeching of those skills and a bleeding of those assets because of the failure to invest and reinvest by both the private sector and central Government in a sensible and adequate training programme. Our greatest asset in that region is the skilled work force, but we are bleeding that region. The responsibility for that will continue to lie with this Government until the day comes — very shortly now — when they are kicked out of office.

6.7 pm

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) for raising this important issue, which affects many right hon. and hon. Members. I shall risk being unfashionable in seeking to find common ground with the Opposition. I agree that more investment in the north-west is needed. However, the Opposition seem to imply that it is in the Government's gift to bring that about. That is not true. The Government can do a great deal but we have to recognise the Government's limitations in the private sector. The real problem is the disparity in private investment between one part of the country and another. The amount of money being invested by the private sector in the south of England is many times larger than that which is being invested in the north-west. That is the main reason for the growing disparity between the various regions. That problem has to be addressed. It is no use arguing with each other about policy.

Why is the economy becoming more and more centralised in the south-east? There seem to be various reasons for it. They are partly to do with history and partly to do with the fact that some traditional industries are closing down or reducing their capacity, in particular in the north of England. It also appears to have something to do with the fact that for many reasons London is becoming the centre of finance and various new industries. When a new industry closes down in one part of the country it is not replaced there but new industries appear in a narrow band somewhere between London and Swindon. No Government can try to reverse that trend by themselves. It is up to regions such as the north-west to attract business back.

There are various ways that the Government can help. The first is with major infrastructure projects, which are needed not just for their own sake but to attract industry to a region. For example, in the Bolton area we have long been campaigning for the trunk road network to be completed. Last year the Government promised the M6-M61 link—route 225—which will do a great deal to complete the network and improve industries' communications in a westward direction. It will also do a great deal

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

for road safety. We have also been campaigning for a long time for the Windsor link between Victoria and Piccadilly and we now have a promise of that. Such projects are vital if we are to make the region more attractive to industry.

Hon. Members have mentioned the airport. That is a major asset of the north-west. It is unlikely that modern businesses will decide to set up in the north-west without good air travel facilities. I endorse what has been said by others about the rail link. Even if the rail link between Manchester and the airport does not meet British Rail's current criteria, it should be recognised that it is vital that everything possible is done to help Manchester airport to grow and serve the region in future. If the rail link does that, Ministers should look carefully at the criteria that they are using and do everything possible to reach a favourable decision.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend deplore the action of trade unions which call for strikes at Manchester airport when the Government are doing so much to encourage investment there?

Mr. Sackville: I agree. The last thing that we need do in the north-west is to shoot ourselves in the foot in that way by closing an airport for the day. What can possibly be achieved by that? The one-day strike must have destroyed a great deal of business.

The Government can also help regions through regional grants. It is wrong to talk about the Government pouring money into other parts of the country. Public sector investment per head in the north-west is much higher than in other parts of the country, as will be borne out by the statistics. Again, we must not confuse public sector investment with private sector investment. On the other hand, it is not that easy to convince Government to give the north-west the right priority. I notice from a recent parliamentary answer on regional selective assistance that in 1985-86 Scotland received £41·6 million, Wales £21·7 million and the north-west, with a comparable population, £10·8 million.

Money for other infrastructure projects such as housing is important and I should like to see housing allocations reflect more accurately the real needs. The allocation of housing money in Britain should be affected by the unemployment rate in the different regions.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) that a Secretary of State should reply to the debate. I have no worries at all about my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment answering the debate. I am sure that he will do so ably. However, the Government should, in all their decision making, take greater account of the regional impact of what every Department does, whether it is a matter of health, housing or whatever. Britain needs a better and more comprehensive regional policy. Then perhaps we shall have a better and more equal spread of private investment in the regions. One of the regions most in need is clearly the north-west.

6.15 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): This is an important debate. The north-west is asking for nothing that it is not entitled to. Britain's wealth and prosperity in the previous century and in the early part of this century was made in the north-west which was the cradle of the industrial revolution. Indeed, it is because we were the cradle of the industrial revolution that we face many of the problems that we do today, which need a solution and demand more money from Government sources.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) who said that the private sector can largely do that job. I do not deride the private sector and say that it has no part to play in this, but at the end of the day the problem is so vast that the Government must provide the money that is needed.

As has been said by several hon. Members, the rail link to Manchester needs electrification. I welcome the proposed introduction of Sprinters on the line from Manchester to Blackpool, but that line also needs electrification, as, ultimately, does the east Lancashire line which has now seen the welcome introduction of the Pacer trains.

We need the M65 link to the M6 and M61. There is a strong case for a link from the M65 eastwards into Yorkshire and to the M1. We need that because the M62 is overloaded. Another transport feature of the area, which is evidence of the industrial revolution, is the Leeds and Liverpool canal. The Government have a duty to support the project, at present under study, to deal with the obsolescence and dereliction along that canal and they should make funds available for that. It runs as a ribbon through Lancashire and into Liverpool and resources are needed to deal with the problem.

The project that has been undertaken at Wigan pier will be a tremendous improvement and its example can be followed in Lancashire, Wigan and, indeed, in the Weavers triangle in Burnley.

Lancashire needs some £44 million over the next five years if we are to bring our schools into an adequate state of repair. In my constituency one school was closed earlier in the year and the county council has now decided that two schools need repair and rebuilding as a matter of priority. To carry those schemes out will mean taking money from other parts of Lancashire unless the Government are prepared to make money available.

Those are just a few of the points that can be made. We need resources. The Government need a change of direction and if they do not make it they will get the answer at the next general election.

6.18 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): We have had an excellent debate and I thank the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) for arranging it.

We had a major contribution from my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who drew our attention to the "State of the Regions" report from the North of England Consortium, which is supported by all the local authorities in the north, and speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham), for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) and for Burnley (Mr. Pike). I am pleased that the debate has also been attended by my hon. Friends the Members for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), and for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and by my right hon. Friends the Members for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) and for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon).

It has been recognised, certainly since the early 1970s, that there has been a major inner city problem in this

country with its roots in complex economic and social factors that go back at least to the war. However, the scale and depth of the problem have become much worse in the past seven years.

Ten years ago my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), when Secretary of State for the Environment, made a major speech in Manchester which signalled a change in the Labour Government's approach to inner cities and the start of a major effort by that Government towards the inner cities. He drew attention to the appalling unemployment in the Liverpool travel-to-work area, which stood at 12 per cent. —a rate which is now below our national average for unemployment. Today's figure for the Liverpool travel-to-work area is 21 per cent. and in many parts of Liverpool the figure is up to 50 per cent.

We see the same story across the rest of the region with unemployment at 15 per cent. in Manchester—even on the Government's fiddled figures — and in Blackburn and Burnley, 19 per cent. in Widnes and Runcorn and 18 per cent. in Rochdale, the Wirral and Chester.

However, unemployment is primarily an urban problem. Even in the north-west there are areas of great and sustained prosperity. For example, cheek by jowl with my constituency at Blackburn is the rural area of Ribble Valley, where the Clitheroe travel-to-work area has the second lowest unemployment rate in the country at 5·6 per cent. It is over the hill and far away—another country. We are dealing with partly a regional problem and partly a problem of the major conurbations. There are similarities between the problems that we face in the north-west and those that are faced in the hearts of London and Birmingham.

Jobs are an indicator of the depths of the problem, but so, too, is housing. The decay of the housing stock in both the public and private sectors in the north-west has been cataclysmic. There was a small increase in expenditure in 1982, with the pre-election splurge on improvement grants, but that has been it. The figures of the decline of housing investment, even allowing for the relative improvement in expenditure on grants for the private sector, tell their own tale. A sample of eight boroughs in the north-west — Liverpool, Manchester, Salford, Knowsley, Sefton, Rochdale, Blackburn and Blackpool — shows that, at constant prices, £285 million was allocated to those areas for housing investment in the last year of the Labour Government. This year, it is £94 million—a cut of two thirds in housing investment.

Another indicator of the problems is the extent of social and economic decay, which have been most obviously and graphicaly illustrated in the past decade by riots of a sort that we have not seen since the turn of the century, and by the level of drug addiction and the idleness and waste.

There are many causes of the problems faced by the inner cities. Official policy, reacting to overpopulation after the war and in the 1950s, favoured decentralisation and moving people out of the cities. Many people in the cities did not need official encouragement and moved without any encouragement. Overestimates of population growth led to great emphasis being placed on the growth of new towns, with the inner cities suffering.

In addition, we have seen the results of market forces, with companies deciding that it is more profitable to leave the inner cities and invest outside. They have done that in great numbers, which is one reason why Ribble Valley is much more prosperous than Blackburn, though the people are roughly the same

The Government's constant refrain is that problems have been caused and not solved by the use of extra resources. We have heard from the chairman of the Conservative party, who is now basking in the glory of last Thursday's election results, that the problem of the inner cities was that money was thrown at them. We remember the inner city debate in which we were treated to an intellectual extravaganza by the chairman of the Conservative party as he heaped one insult on another in an effort to prise open the problems of the inner cities.

However, even more thoughtful members of the Government, who have nothing to do with the chairman of the Tory party, have been dragged down to that level. The Secretary of State for the Environment said that in the 1960s and 1970s

"vast sums were literally thrown at the inner cities."—[*Official Report*, 4 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 293.]

That statement is simply untrue. The record shows that in the 1960s and 1970s, precisely because of the emphasis of policy away from the cities, money was not thrown at the inner cities. Of course, money was spent on housing, but it was principally spent on slum replacement and would inevitably have had to be spent. The emphasis of expenditure was not towards inner cities but away from them. It was against that background that the right hon. and learned Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon) made a speech in the 1970s when he was Secretary of State for the Environment in which he spoke of the revolt of the cities. They were revolting against the lack of expenditure. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney — against all the odds — turned the engine of Government towards the inner cities, but generally there has not been expenditure on the inner cities; they have been neglected.

When examining the record of the last seven years, no one could accuse the present Government of throwing money at the inner cities. There has been a catastrophic loss of resources. A total of £2·4 billion of rate support grant has been taken away from the north-west compared with 1979—£370 for every man, woman and child in the region. As I said, housing investment programmes have been cut by 66 per cent.

Everyone accepts that Liverpool has a housing problem, yet its housing investment programme has been cut from £66 million to £26 million. Manchester's programme has been cut from £96 million to £26 million, and Salford's programme has been cut from £50 million to £14 million. Even Blackpool, which has a housing problem, despite the fact that it is represented by a Conservative council, has seen its programme cut from £7 million to £1 million. That is a record of utter neglect by the Government.

We have also seen the neglect of public transport. There have been cuts in subsidies and fare increases and soon there will be chaos and anarchy as a result of the deregulation of the buses. There is no doubt that a good and cheap public transport system is critical to keeping industry in the inner cities. The British chambers of commerce say in their latest submission that the Tyne and Wear metro has had

"a magnetic effect on company location."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Central said, the same would happen if the rapid light transport

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system and many other improvements in public transport were introduced in Manchester. Instead, in response to the crisis in the inner cities, we have had only cuts in public sector investment, and that has been a major contribution to the crisis.

Partly in consequence of the neglect of our region, the voters gave the Government a massive rejection at the polls on Thursday. I should put on record the fact that not one of the urban councils in the north-west that were up for election last Thursday remained Conservative. Indeed, of the 29 councils up for election in the region only one stayed Conservative, and that was Congleton—hardly a major urban centre.

The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), is a wet. I was told earlier that Ladbrokes quote the odds against his becoming Secretary of State for Education and Science at 1,500 to one, and we wish him well. However, while we know the hon. Gentleman to be a good wet who agrees with us rather than with the chairman of the Conservative party, he supports and sustains the Government, as do all the other Conservative Members who have been wringing their hands. The Government's problem is that, like the Bourbons, over the past seven years they have forgotten nothing and learnt nothing from their experiences.

One reason why those of us present on the Opposition Benches are Socialists—at least, all but one of us are——

Mr. Alton: Hear, hear.

Mr. Straw: We are Socialists because we do not believe that market forces alone can benefit the people. We believe that a free market wastes resources. Nowhere is that better illustrated than in the inner cities. Although it is rational for companies to decide to establish their firms outside inner cities if they find that land, transport and communications are cheaper, it does not follow that the aggregate total of those decisions is of benefit to the country as a whole. The hidden hand of the market does not work in that way. The result is that resources are wasted within the inner city and outside.

Conservative Members may disagree with my analysis about the failure of market forces to produce welfare, but they should wake up to the consequences of neglecting the inner cities for their heartland areas.

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I shall not give way because of the time.

It is true that on the whole inner city areas are Labour controlled, but if the inner cities are neglected the problem will flow to the Conservative semi-rural heartlands. The pressure will be on for building land. People who have moved into green and pleasant countryside areas to get away from city hordes will find that all sorts of housing estates are popping up and that filthy factories are being run next door. The developers will have a riot on their hands such as the one in Essex, which is faced by those trying to develop the green belt area around Tillingham hall. I may not appeal to the social conscience of the Government in pleading for inner city policy, or pleading that they be converted to our view of Socialism, but, rather like the argument used by the public health protagonists in favour of the Governments of previous centuries doing something about cholera, I say that unless we do something about inner cities the problems will spread to the areas of Conservative Members.

If we felt that private enterprise would work to provide a solution, as the hon. Member for Crosby suggests, we would support the motion wholeheartedly. However, I ask hon. Members to look at the record. Look at the record of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). Five years ago he took a bus load of entrepreneurs around Merseyside and said, in exactly the same terms as we have heard today, that all they had to do was harness the private sector and all would be well. Look at the fact that Inner City Enterprises, an institution set up to harness entrepreneurs and big institutions to the inner city, has managed to produce only £3 million to £5 million and the National Westminster bank, a key backer of ICE, has pulled out.

That is the record of the private sector. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Derek Hatton"?] Let us look at the record of the present Secretary of State for Education and Science before Mr. Derek Hatton was even thought of. I have said that the Conservatives have forgotten nothing and learnt nothing. The rhetoric we are now hearing is the rhetoric which the House and the country heard 23 years ago from the present Secretary of State for Education and Science, then the Minister responsible for housing. The inner city problem was described as a "twilight" problem. The right hon. Gentleman was going round the country saying that private enterprise had to be brought in to solve the problems of inner city housing. He said:

> "The energies of private enterprise must be released in this field as they have already been released, most successfully, in the field of town centre redevelopment."

Local authorities were forced to put up tower blocks all over the country because of the subsidy policy of that Minister and because the appeal to the private sector to be involved in the development did not work. It wanted the profits from putting up the buildings, but it did not want to be involved in the risks because that is not British capitalism.

From the hon. Member for Crosby we heard about the example of the Merseyside development corporation. I hope that he is not part of the Tebbit tendency which believes that when one loses local elections one should abolish those councils or reduce their powers, because some of the things he said are very worrying. There have been many suggestions, not from the hon. Member for Crosby but from those senior to him who have votes on the Cabinet Committees, that local authorities should be bypassed in the need to regenerate inner cities. I hope that the Minister mentions that in his reply.

I applaud the work of the Merseyside development corporation. It is in a different category from that of the London Docklands development corporation. It works well with local authorities. Development corporations have a role, but local authorities have the key role. Professor Noel Boaden, a member of Merseyside development corporation, was quoted in *The Guardian* on 13 December as saying that such bodies as development corporations

> "are successful only when tackling specific projects like riverside renewal."

He said that their role has to be limited. I am glad that the hon. Member for Crosby accepts that. The role of development corporations is not to replace the role of local authorities but to supplement it.

What we need to see from this Government—I do not think that we will—is a total shift in the emphasis of policy to recognise the importance of the region and the importance of the industrial heartland of this country to the wealth of the rest of the country, including, above all, the City of London. London is and always will be a leech and parasite on the rest of the nation. Our wealth depends on manufacturing.

We need a change in regional and industrial assistance. The Government have massacred such assistance. That is reflected in the fact that relative unemployment figures are much worse between the regions than they were seven years ago. We need a regional voice. At least the Labour party is now calling for regional councils for areas such as the north-west so that the regions can have a vibrant voice.

We need a major change in the Government's public expenditure priorities. At the weekend we heard of the now significant split inside the Cabinet between those who want to give people back their own money by way of tax cuts and those who want to give it back by way of jobs through public spending. I hope that the Minister will say that he is on the side of the Biffen tendency when he replies. If the Government were to put money and real resources into the north-west and our inner cities, it would benefit not only those areas but the people of those areas and at last the jobless total would start to go down rather than up.

6.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): I am conscious of the fact that I am the only Member to speak who does not come from the north-west. I begin by recognising that the scale of the problem is very different from that in the area of London that I represent. Having said that, I find it strange that none of the Labour Members representing Liverpool, where the problems of the north-west are at their most acute, spoke in or appeared during the debate.

I begin by complimenting my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) for the measured and eloquent way in which he moved the motion. I was impressed by the arguments he deployed about the need to make a stitch in time to save higher expenditure later. He said that the problems he described had not arisen overnight and that they would take some time to solve. The key theme of his speech was the recognition that if we are to make faster progress we must harness the energy and dynamism of the private sector in a number of areas, not least in housing. He showed quite forcefully that investment through the construction industry was one of the most effective ways of reducing unemployment in the north-west, as anywhere else. I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that, due to the eloquence with which he moved his motion, the Government are happy to accept it. I shall deal with many of the points he made.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and others referred to the local election results in the north-west last Thursday. My reaction to the taunts of the Labour party is to quote from what the chief of police said in the final act of "The Pirates of Penzance":

"To gain a brief advantage you've contrived, but your proud triumph will not be long-lived."

Mr. Eastham: Can the Minister sing it?

Sir George Young: If provoked, I could sing not only that but the rest of "The Pirates of Penzance".

However, there is a note of caution for Opposition Members in the election results. A number of Labour-controlled authorities in the north-west may either adopt or continue to implement policies which will deeply embarrass the Opposition Front Bench and give a totally different flavour from that currently being advertised on television.

I see from today's edition of the *Daily Telegraph* that the Opposition are already aware of that risk. The article states:

"Mr. Kinnock, Labour leader, and Dr. John Cunningham, Labour Environment spokesman, have told the new groups they will not back confrontation with the Government which could lead to illegality."

I also notice that some of the results were not an undisguised triumph for the alliance. In Rochdale, which I imagine would be a Liberal stronghold, there was a net loss of two seats, and the alliance lost its only representative in Rossendale.

Last week's results were disappointing. I am sorry to see some good councillors and administrations lose office through no fault of their own. For us, it has to be a time of analysis, reflection and teamwork.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I should like to draw the Minister's attention to the result in Sefton, which he failed to mention. It puts me in a difficulty. I can no longer attack Sefton council with the same regularity as in the past because the Conservatives have lost overall control. Also, although many of my Liverpool colleagues are not here, I am here from Bootle as secretary of the Merseyside group of Labour Members of Parliament, and I am listening attentively to the debate.

Sir George Young: I am not sure that the presence of the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) compensates for the absence of the five Labour Members of Parliament from Liverpool. It is not helped by the fact that the hon. Gentleman arrived within the last five or 10 minutes.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) said that the north-west has lost most from the recession. It follows from that that it has most to gain from the recovery in the economy. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Sir W. Clegg) put the problem in perspective, and rightly reminded the House that much of the poorly constructed housing in the north-west was built by the public sector. For that reason, he cautioned us against over-reliance on the public sector in future.

Mr. Eastham: Will the Minister give way?

Sir George Young: I shall not give way because I must try to make progress.

Mr. Eastham *rose*——

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman spoke for about 22 minutes. I must try to deal with the debate.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) implied that the Government were cutting back on home insulation grants. The fact is that expenditure has been less to avoid allocating funds that are not used. We made it clear when we allocated the money at the beginning of the year that supplementary resources are available, and local authorities that find that their allocation is used up can bid for extra resources.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) made a powerful case on housing. I am aware of his constituency's needs. He has been good enough to bring delegations on at least one occasion. He mentioned

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the neighbourhood revitalisation scheme. I had a positive meeting with the National Home Improvement Council last week, which sponsors the NRS. I was interested to learn that it is anxious to expand the scheme. I hope that my Department will be able to help. I shall certainly bring to its attention the strong claim of my hon. Friend's area if the scheme is expanded.

The hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) mentioned education, as did some other hon. Members. Of course, the Government take seriously the reports from Her Majesty's inspectors and others about the repair of some school buildings, which often have suffered from years of neglect. The responsibility for repair and maintenance lies with the education authorities, but our expenditure plans have allowed a 13 per cent. increase in real terms between 1981-82 and 1984-85 for school repairs and maintenance.

Some hon. Members mentioned recent job losses and redundancies in the region. It would have balanced the picture if they had mentioned some of the good news. For example, Philips Electrical and Du Pont announced an investment of £4 million in compact disc production at the Mallard plant in Blackburn by the end of the year. There will be some 30,000 sq. ft. of plant and about 150 people will be employed. There has been major investment by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defence in the north-west through the defence programme. One has to put that in perspective and not just look at the closures. One also has to look at the jobs that are being created.

I was interested to see that the vacancies notified to jobcentres in the north-west in March 1986 were more than 10 per cent. up on the same month a year ago. I am sure that the whole House will agree that that is a trend in the right direction.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) gave a robust exposition of the case for free enterprise and self-help, which we all greatly enjoyed. The hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) mentioned Trafford park, as did some other hon. Members. I hope to say a word about that in a moment. My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) mentioned the revival of the private sector house building industry. Through our policy to bring down inflation and mortgage rates, the private sector has confidence that it did not have throughout the 1970s. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) rightly mentioned some of the constraints on central Government and asked us to take note of the regional consequences of national decisions. Of course, we must do that.

In addition to my hon. Friends who spoke, I was pleased to see in their places my hon. Friends the Members for Chorley (Mr. Dover), for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg), for Lancaster (Mrs Kellett-Bowman), for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd) and for Bury, North (Mr. Burt).

At the beginning of his remarks, the hon. Member for Blackburn contrasted capital allocations for housing in the last year of his Administration with some more recent ones of ours. He left out capital receipts. Under the Labour Administration, there were not many capital receipts because there was no right to buy. If one is to look at the total picture, it is slightly more accurate to add to the allocations the accumulated capital receipts on which local authorities can draw. I was slightly surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman, whom I had always thought to be one of the more sensible members of the Labour party, refer to the City as a leech and a parasite. It generates a substantial amount of invisible earnings for this country, which enables us to import food and other raw materials. It is one of the areas where we can compete effectively with Europe, north America and other parts of the world. To decry the City of London in those terms is short-sighted and not in this country's interests.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby was rightly concerned to ensure that our infrastructure is maintained and renewed so that it is healthy and capable of supporting a growing economy. The Government have been doing that. Our public sector capital spending record is good. Equally important, it has been achieved alongside policies that have been responsible for turning round the economy. The country is now entering its sixth successive year of growth, the longest period since the 1973 oil price rise. Therefore, we have maintained public sector investment in infrastructure and established a firm base of economic growth. That has to be the right long-term route to improved infrastructure and lasting jobs.

One or two hon. Members mentioned motorways. The north-west is well served by trunk road and motorway networks compared with the south-east. It has over 300 miles of motorways in use with more under construction or planned. Of the schemes that are planned, several are bypasses of towns and villages, reflecting the Government's policy of encouraging heavy traffic away from residential areas.

One or two hon. Members mentioned the water authorities. There was a sustained decline in capital investment in the region over several years to a low of £67 million in 1978-79. That decline has been brought to an end and turned round with a sustained year-on-year increase in capital expenditure in the north-west. In the current financial year it is £163 million. It has been a long haul to make up lost ground, but good progress is being made.

Some hon. Members mentioned the Health Service. Capital expenditure in the two regions has increased in real terms since we came to office. Since April 1979, six major schemes have been started on site in the two regions—each worth over £5 million — at Salford, Oldham, Tameside, Halton, Macclesfield and Southport. A further 10 schemes in the £2 million to £5 million range were also started during that period.

Private sector housing starts in the north-west last year were over 10 per cent. up on the previous year—double the national increase of 5 per cent. The level of expenditure on housing repair and maintenance in the north-west last year was also running ahead of the national trend. Spending was more than 15 per cent. up in Great Britain on the 1981 level.

Several hon. Members mentioned improvement grants. The number of improvement grants paid to private owners and tenants in the north-west last year were down on the 1983 and 1984 record level, but they were still higher than in any year between 1975 and 1982.

Of course, there are always demands for higher investment, particularly in parts of the country that have undergone sustained periods of underinvestment. I believe that our record on public expenditure in the north-west reflects the Government's good record on public expenditure in the country as a whole. Nationally, capital

spending on national roads has increased in real terms by about one quarter since 1978-79 and provision for capital maintenance has also gone up. Capital expenditure on the Health Service is now some 30 per cent. up on 1978-79.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby mentioned inner city policy. The Government have used a variety of initiatives to make progress. Finance for the urban programme has risen from £93 million in 1978-79 to its present figure of almost £300 million. Derelict land grant has risen from £21 million in 1978-79 to more than £80 million now. The urban development grant receives £85 million from public expenditure and has levered £366 million from the private sector. The urban development corporation receives £360 million worth of public money leading to more than £1 billion of private sector investment in the London Docklands development corporation area alone. Some 25 enterprise zones have been designated, and 1,000 firms are providing 10,000 jobs, half of which are new jobs.

The Government have also introduced the land register. Areas of land registered since 1980 total 148,000 acres and the total area removed to date is 38,000 acres.

On the key theme of partnership, the Government have tried to use public sector money to tempt in the private sector. On many of the schemes that I have outlined we have had gearing ratios as high as 5:1 — £1 of taxpayers' money invested in a scheme bringing in £5 from the private sector. That is helping to generate confidence in areas and represents an extremely effective use of taxpayers' money. There are several good examples of that in the north-west.

For example, in the city of Salford, unpopular council flats on Regent road were sold to Barratts and were successfully refurbished for sale. Some 280 flats at Ladywell have recently been sold for improvement and sale, and the city council has other proposals which have been submitted to my Department under the urban housing renewal unit set up last year.

There have been other partnership schemes, again with Barratts, for a major transformation of an unpopular inner city council estate of 1,000 flats and maisonettes. The Government are considering a number of bids under the urban housing renewal unit, although in the case of one such bid from Bolton—that for Wilkinson gardens—I have already announced that the proposals have been approved. That is a £790,000 scheme to revitalise parts of a rundown housing estate with a package of measures put together by Bolton borough council in collaboration with my Department. I am delighted that councils in Salford and Bolton have taken a pragmatic approach to the role which the private sector can play in upgrading the nation's housing stock.

Another Labour authority, the city of Manchester, has, unfortunately, been slower to appreciate the benefits of that approach. On 11 December last year, my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction wrote to that council proposing a feasibility study to see how, in consultation with tenants, private developers could contribute to the resolution of physical and social problems on the council's 5,000-dwelling Hulme estate. Although we have undertaken to finance this study, the council has so far failed to respond positively to our proposals. I am surprised and disappointed at that—as I am sure others are—because the council could have seized the opportunity not just to attract extra finance into that problematical area of inner city housing, but to take advantage of the flair and imagination which private developers have demonstrated in other nearby places, often with Labour authorities.

Mr. Alton: The Minister has made an important point. How would he enhance the rights of tenants to take the initiative over and above a local authority which decides mindlessly to pull down housing that could be improved if such partnership schemes were entered into? Some authorities do not seem to be prepared to explore such opportunities.

Sir George Young: The Housing and Planning Bill, which is in another place and which has been through this House, has made improved provision for tenant co-operatives. The Government accepted an amendment on Report which gave more rights than had hitherto been the case to tenants to allow them to take the initiative over the management of estates. I should be surprised if a local authority decided to proceed with the demolition of an estate or block of flats against the express wishes of the tenants. That would be bad politics and bad economics.

Several hon. Members have mentioned Trafford park, in Manchester. As hon. Members have said, Trafford park was a major industrial estate set up in the 1890s at the head of the Manchester Ship canal. A number of major companies with premises in the park have grouped together as the Trafford park major manufacturers group. They have persuaded the borough council, the Department of Trade and Industry and my Department to put in £25,000 each to fund the Trafford park investment strategy. That will be carried out by outside consultants and is designed to regenerate the area using public sector money to lever out substantial sums of private sector finance. We expect the final report later this month.

The Government's major successes in controlling inflation and creating a climate in which economic growth has not only been nurtured but sustained for the sixth successive year provide an excellent springboard for the future of the country as a whole and for the north-west region. In this, the Government have a clear role in providing the kind of infrastructure to which we attach such importance. Although the Government have initiated and encouraged collaboration between the public and private sectors, we attach great importance to the provision of infrastructure where the public sector is the main provider.

I am greatly heartened by the response of the private sector which I have illustrated with a few examples this evening.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my hon. Friend aware that at its northern conference last month the Institute of Directors called strongly for the establishment of a north-west development corporation? Will he support such an excellent and much needed initiative?

Sir George Young: Of course the Government will consider such an initiative, but that may fall to my colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry.

As I have said, there is imaginative interest from the private sector in some of the issues that we have discussed. That is shown by the construction industry and by other industries and institutions. The propects for the north-west are bright with the prospect of more jobs and greater prosperity.

6.57 pm

Mr. Thornton: We have had a wide-ranging debate, although on several occasions hon. Members have strayed from the subject of the motion, but we are used to that in debates about the north-west.

I apologise to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) for my absence from the Chamber during part of his speech. I am sure that he will understand the reasons for my absence. I would like to clarify two of the hon. Gentleman's points. I was not suggesting that the private sector should have the sole role. I believe that there should be a partnership arrangement between the private sector and the public sector at local and national levels. These elements are all important, and one element cannot be taken from the equation if it is to be a success.

The hon. Member for Blackburn expressed some anxiety about my statement about the possibility of local authority powers being bypassed. I hope that the record will show that I was not being critical of all local authorities. I suggested that there are some local authorities which, by their actions, have shown that they are incapable or unwilling—it must be for the individual to judge which — to tackle some of the problems. Perhaps the establishment of development corporations and an extension of their role will be a way of dealing with these critical issues. I believe that there should be a specific role and not a general role. I was not seeking a general usurping of local authority powers. Local authorities are uniquely placed to achieve many improvements in the development of the infrastructure in the north-west. They should play their part and take the responsibility that is clearly theirs.

Several hon. Members have referred to the north-south debate, or divide. It is clear that there is a divide opening up. The purpose of this debate is to draw attention to ways of bridging that divide. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) that we should encourage private sector development wherever possible. We want to stand on our own feet and we do not expect the rest of the country to bail us out. We must recognise that the decline in the north-west, which has had a major impact on infrastructure, is part of the structural decline of the basic industry of the country. The north-west has not brought this suffering on itself and no Government, Labour or Conservative, has been able to reverse the decline. However, all Governments must recognise that the decline must be reversed. If we can be given the investment, both public and private, which can stimulate an improvement in the infrastructure in the north-west, we shall be able to attract investment from which jobs will flow.

The motion proposes the adoption of a series of measures which I cannot believe anyone can oppose. It offers things that the Government want and things that the people want. The construction industry is ready, willing and able to take its part. We need to get the partnership going. Let us get on with the job, for we have no more time to lose.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, concerned at the long-term implications for public expenditure of the condition of much of the national housing stock and infrastructure, particularly in the North West region, urges Her Majesty's Government to open immediate negotiations with the construction industry with a view to encouraging greater private sector financing of inner city housing and infrastructure projects and a more effective utilisation of existing monies which Her Majesty's Government have made available through a variety of programmes designed to deal with both urban renewal and job creation.

Adjournment (Spring)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising on Friday 23rd May, do adjourn until Tuesday 3rd June; and that the House shall not adjourn on Friday 23rd May until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses. *—[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

7 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I begin this spring Adjournment debate by congratulating my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on injecting an extra dimension of excitement, mystery and suspense into what might otherwise be a traditional and somewhat moribund debate. I refer to my right hon. Friend's broadcast on London Weekend Television yesterday, which some have seen as a titillating trailer to our proceedings this evening, of which his reply will be the main feature.

My only comment on my right hon. Friend's broadcast is that it reminded me of the ambiguous pronoucements of the oracle of Delphi. The House will recall that the oracle's most famous piece of advice was "Stick to your wooden walls." Half the citizens of Athens interpreted that as a recommendation to hunker down in their wooden bunkers while the other half went fleeing to their wooden-hulled ships. I suspect that the Tory party, like the ancient Athenians, will be equally divided in its reaction to our newest oracle's pronouncement. However, my right hon. Friend always has the gift of being stimulating.

There was one passage in my right hon. Friend's speech which riveted my attention and which I should like to take as my text, as it is said in ecclesiastical circles, for my remarks this evening. The words of my right hon. Friend which caught my attention were:

"There is no harm for the Tory party from time to time to remember that the language and the outlook of conservation is as valid in its traditions as reform and radicalism."

That is an admirable sentiment and one which is being implemented to some extent by the Government. The outlook of conservation is definitely being applied gradually to modern farming and the efforts of the green tendency are winning the argument against those who want ever-increasing production of higher and higher grain mountains.

I suggest, too, in the light of recent events, that the language of conservation should be applied to our nuclear energy programme. In spite of the excellent safety record of our nuclear industry, it is insensitive to declare that we shall embark on a massive extension of nuclear power in the 1990s. We know that 25 per cent. of our national energy needs will come from nuclear power once the present power stations which are now in use or under construction are on stream. We should be sensitive to the public's understandable horror of the consequences of nuclear accidents. However remote the possibility of nuclear accidents may be, some residue of fear will remain. It is time to pause and let the language and outlook of conservation have its head in nuclear matters.

My right hon. Friend will not be entirely surprised to learn that my principal argument this evening is that the language and outlook of conservation should be applied to the Channel tunnel project. The Channel tunnel is fast becoming an albatross around the Government's neck. It is not necessary to be an Ancient Mariner to know that the Bill is already marooned on procedural difficulties. Many people in Kent are incensed at the injustice that has been done to them by the Government's headlong rush to support the big business consortium's interests at the expense of the wider public interest and the many private interests, businesses and individuals that will be affected. The punters in the City are nervously putting their hands back into their pockets because the hot favourite looks more and more like a financial loser as the true figures come out and the Bill faces death by several hundred amendments and several thousand petitions.

Let me return for a moment to the language and outlook of conservation on the Channel tunnel. After all, that was the language used by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport when he first introduced the project. My right hon. Friend, stressing the Government's neutrality and willingness to see fair play, said:

"I do not want hon. Members to think that we have pre-judged the issues. When they have had time to study the guidelines, they will recognise my concern to ensure that there is adequate public consultation, that environmental, social and employment impacts are fully appreciated and that the financial conditions are fully met." — [*Official Report*, 2 April 1985; Vol. 76, c. 1078.]

Those words have not been met by the facts that have followed them.

There was an understandable degree of doubt whether we should have a public inquiry on this issue. I would have welcomed a shortened form of public inquiry of the sort envisaged by the late Anthony Crosland when he had the stewardship of an earlier Channel tunnel project. Be that as it may, the Government decided upon the hybrid Bill procedure, and some of the hearings will be held locally as a way of carrying out public consultations. The Government gave an undertaking to follow the precedent of the Channel Tunnel Bill 1974 in the same way.

In the debate on 9 December, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport said:

"If the House gives the Bill a Second Reading, it will be committed to a Select Committee to hear and consider petitions. The Bill will already have been advertised; anyone who has an objection to it will have an opportunity to petition against it and, subject to his petition being accepted by the Committee, he will appear and present his case to the Select Committee. Subject to the rulings of the Select Committee, I would expect that those eligible would include individuals whose private interests are affected—those representing local trades, businesses and other local interests which may be adversely affected, those representing amenity, ecology, educational and recreational interests who believe that their interests are adversely affected to a material degree, and local authorities in any affected areas."

My right hon. Friend added:

"This is a substantial and thorough procedure which ensures that the public have the widest oportunity to make representations as petitioners to the two Select Committees." — [*Official Report*, 9 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 645.]

My purpose in intervening in this debate is to press my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, with the help of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, I hope, to ensure that the Government line up to the words of the Secretary of State. So far public consultation on this issue has been negligible to the point of being almost insulting. We know that 20,000 pages of documents were assessed in fewer than 35 working days by civil servants working in secret. There was excessive secrecy surrounding the entire project. Only the Channel Tunnel Group, or Eurochannel, as we must learn to call it, has had its figures published. The Government's own figures have not been published. As a result, the White Paper is full of statistical garbage. For example, paragraph 42 deals with the effect on employment in Kent. It contains wildly optimistic figures, which are in complete contradiction to all the

[Mr. Jonathan Aitken]

other figures that are available from other sources. In my constituency, Ramsgate — Britain's second largest Channel port — is completely ignored in the White Paper. The jobs that will be lost there are avoided by selectively picking out the Channel ports of Dover and Folkestone, which are somehow the subject of more optimistic forecasts than the other Channel ports.

The most most worrying feature of all is that the Government, through their parliamentary agent, published a draft timetable of the proceedings on the Bill. It stated that the Select Committee would begin its work on 17 June and finish its hearings on 24 July. That timetable, which was circulated by the Government to interested parties in Kent, was greeted with consternation. At that point, the Standing Orders Committee was asked to grant a dispensation to the Government for violating Standing Orders.

It is no part of my case to argue that the Standing Orders Committee's decision should be pre-judged. That is a matter for the Committee. I am saying that the Government should step in at an early stage to ensure that fair play is seen to take place. It would be a travesty of justice if the Select Committee's proceedings were to be shorter than those which normally take place in considering any other private Bill. It would be a travesty if the proceedings were to be shorter than those envisaged for the previous Channel Tunnel Bill. The idea that the measure can be railroaded through in a short time is inimical to the traditions of fair play in the passage of private Bills, and I see no reason why an exception should be made in this instance.

The time has come for the wiser heads in the Government, among whom I now number my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House who espouses the language and outlook of conservation, to remember the famous dictum of a great Conservative, Viscount Falkland, who said:

"When it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change."

I suggest that that rubric should be applied to the Channel tunnel project.

7.9 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Before we adjourn for the Whitsun recess, I should like to draw the House's attention to the announcement by British Rail on 22 February, which outlined proposals for a major reorganisation of freight services throughout south Wales.

It would be a misnomer to call the proposals a reorganisation. It is a decimation of the service—Serpel in disguise. Matters are even more disturbing because the Secretary of State for Wales and the Secretary of State for Transport seem to be so little concerned about the drastic proposals. On 26 March, we had a full day's debate on transport infrastructure in Wales in the Welsh Grand Committee, during which the Secretary of State for Wales failed even to mention this important issue until I drew it to his attention. Likewise, during the debate on the Floor of the House on transport on 22 April, the Secretary of State for Transport, despite fulsome praise for Sir Robert Reid, the chairman of BR, did not mention BR's drastic proposals for south Wales, which would have a catastrophic effect on freight services there. I should like to draw attention to the proposed closure of the Severn tunnel junction. More than 400 jobs would be lost there but it has been suggested that more then 200 employees could be found alternative work elsewhere. Well informed reports cast doubt on that assessment. It is the biggest marshalling facility in the western region, which serves south Wales and the west country. Suggesting the closure of such a valuable facility calls into question whether BR wants to remain in the freight business. The proposals are the language of defeatism. If implemented, they would continue the spiral of decline from which our rail network has suffered for so long.

Road transport is now the main means of conveying goods and people. At times, that leads to environmental problems. There is nothing more nauseating to me than seeing large coal lorries trudging up and down our south Wales valleys. Such bulk traffic rightly belongs to rail. Much of the coal from the Gwent pits for the Central Electricity Generating Board's Uskmouth power station is now transported by road. Before the miners' strike, almost all of it went by rail. Many road vehicles transport coal from the Welsh pits to the CEGB's power station in England, mainly Didcot via the M4. That can only harm the image of road haulage. It will certainly increase the power and influence of the environmental lobby.

I should also like to draw attention to an accident that was recently reported in the press. A young woman was killed in north Wales by a 9lb piece of metal casing from a cat's eye which smashed through the windscreen of her car. Surveyors in south Wales have recently spotted scores of studs that need replacing, having been dislodged by coal lorries. A full investigation and the utmost vigilance are required.

Those examples show how unwise it is to convey large quantities of coal by road. It has been alleged that this is a means of penalising railmen for supporting the miners in the recent struggle. If so, it is very short-sighted. The sooner coal is put back on rail, the better, but if that were likely, BR would not be speculating about closing such an important facility as the Severn tunnel junction.

Over the years, there have been many twists and turns in BR's policy on siting installations. Current proposals fly in the face of earlier decisions. A few years ago, BR made a song and dance about closing the Ebbw bridge facility at Newport in my constituency. It said that it would concentrate at Severn tunnel junction. Now the movement is in the opposite direction. Serious environmental problems are assocated with the proposal to transfer to the east Usk depot in Newport. BR will have to handle many dangerous goods and the public will be apprehensive about that happening in the heart of a heavily populated area.

There have been doubts about the efficiency of BR's freight service. For months before the announcement of reorganisation, local railmen, through their trade union representatives, drew my attention to the shortage of wagons. I have raised the matter with the Secretary of State for Transport and with the chairman of BR. I am sorry to say that the replies have not allayed the anxieties of BR employees.

As for the effect on the local community of closing the Severn tunnel junction, it should be remembered that villages such as Rogiet, Undy, Magor and the small town of Caldicot have grown up with the railway industry. Mr. W. C. Winter, the clerk to Rogiet community council, wrote to me on 24 March saying that the proposals

"will affect fifty seven homes in our small community either with husbands or sons—and in some families both—having to find work in an area without much prospect of any."

Their prospects would not be good, to say the least. The heavily Conservative-controlled Monmouth district council told me on 15 April that it had written in the strongest possible terms to the chairman of BR opposing the proposals. It said that it had drawn attention to the effect on local employment and expressed its anxiety about the detrimental effect of such a closure on rail freight operations in south Wales.

Newport borough council wrote to the chairman of BR on 23 April drawing attention to local efforts to attract new enterprises by emphasising communications and freight movement facilities, of which the Severn tunnel junction is a major part. The council believes that the Severn tunnel junction, with its large acreage in open country, could play a major part in development work on the Channel tunnel.

Gwent county council has taken a similar stand, and has also drawn attention to the nearby century-old Severn tunnel. From a safety standpoint it considers that rail operations at Severn tunnel junction must continue, particularly in order to deal with a major tragedy in the tunnel.

I urge the Leader of the House to prevail upon the Secretary of State for Transport to discuss these matters with the chairman of British Rail at the earliest possible opportunity. Likewise, the British Rail management would be wise to get around the table with the trade unions involved to devise a strategy to win back freight traffic for rail. But first British Rail should discard the absurd proposals announced on 22 February.

7.20 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Thursday of this week marks the six-month anniversary of the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement, and although the House had a two-day debate on the subject on 26 and 27 November last year, there has been no opportunity for a debate on Northern Ireland since then. I therefore take this opportunity to reflect on the experience of the first six months of the agreement and to put some questions to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

It was in no way surprising that this House, with a very large majority in favour of the Anglo-Irish agreement, joined with the Government, as I did, in seeking peace, stability and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. The first six months since the signing of the agreement have not been auspicious. In fashioning the agreement the Government's view that was of prime importance was the fact that it should be acceptable to the minority in Northern Ireland, and I have no doubt that it was broadly acceptable to the minority.

However, the Government overlooked the extent to which the Anglo-Irish agreement was massively unacceptable to the majority in Northern Ireland. I remind my right hon. Friend of the provisions of the Scotland Act and Wales Act 1978. He will remember that Parliament then agreed that Scotland and Wales should be governed differently from the way in which they had been governed in the past. But the Government of the day, as well as this House and another place, decided that before Scotland and Wales were to be governed differently, the approval of this House and another place was not all that was necessary. It was also judged that the opinion of those directly affected—those who live in Scotland an Wales—should be sought, and referendums were held in both Scotland and Wales.

A high test of acceptability was set by Parliament. It was whether 40 per cent. of the electorate—not of those voting — gave their assent to being governed in a different way. But the wise precedent set in the Scotland and Wales Acts was not followed in the case of Northern Ireland. I think that even my right hon. Friend will have no doubt that, had that precedent been followed in Northern Ireland, the result among the electrate would have been nowhere near 40 per cent. In fashioning the Anglo-Irish agreement, I believe that the Government made a major error by ignoring the wishes of the majority and concentrating only on the perceived desire of the minority.

It is not possible to govern one part of this kingdom differently from the way in which it has been governed before, and differently from the way in which we govern the rest of the kingdom, save with the consent of the majority in that part of the kingdom that is to be governed differently.

When they presented the Anglo-Irish agreement to the House, the Government claimed that it was a great step forward because for the first time the Government of the Irish Republic had acknowledged that there could be no change in the status of Northern Ireland, save with the consent of a majority of people in Northern Ireland. But there has been a change in status by the fashioning of this agreement. No one would argue that since 15 November Northern Ireland has been governed in the same way as it had been previously. Therefore, a change in status has taken place — not as part of Her Majesty's dominions but in the sense that Northern Ireland is governed differently.

That is only a minor part of the argument that I am now developing. It is not correct to say, as has been said from the Opposition Front Bench, that it was novel for the Government of the Irish Republic to acknowledge that there could be no change in status, save with the consent of a majority in Northern Ireland. The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), a former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, is in the Chamber and will disagree with me if I have got it wrong. But it will be remembered that the communiqué issued after the Sunningdale conference stated specifically and in the most solemn terms that the Government of the Irish Republic acknowledged that there could be no change in the status of Northern Ireland, save with the consent of the majority. The communiqué also recorded the fact that the text of that undertaking from the Government of the Irish Republic would be registered at the United Nations, in exactly the same way as it was agreed that the Anglo-Irish agreement should be registered at the United Nations.

These are dangerous times in Northern Ireland. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have wisely said that they will operate the Anglo-Irish agreement sensitively. I wish to make four specific suggestions as to how the agreement can be operated with greater sensitivity.

First, it is quite unnecessary for the secretariat that staffs the intergovernmental conference to be situated in Belfast. The secretariat that is now housed in the Province has to be guarded. In a way, it is a fortress. It would be much more sensible to move it from Belfast to London.

[Mr. Ian Gow]

Secondly, it is not necessary, and there is no such provision in the Anglo-Irish agreement, for meetings of the intergovernmental conference at ministerial level to be held in Belfast. I welcome the fact that last week's meeting — the fifth — was held in London. That was a step forward. I hope that the Leader of the House will be able to say that it is intended that future meetings should be held in London rather than in Belfast.

Thirdly, article 3 of the agreement states that there shall be

"Regular and frequent Ministerial meetings".

Mercifully, there is no definition of either "regular" or "frequent". It could be said that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is a regular and frequent appearer on television, but that might mean once every three months, once every six months, once every nine months or even weekly. I welcome the fact that there is no such definition in the agreement. However, a somewhat extended definition of "regular and frequent" would be to the advantage of the situation in Northern Ireland, particularly at this time.

My fourth suggestion relates to the meetings of the intergovernmental conference. In the past, the chief of police of the Republic and the Chief Constable of the RUC have been present at those meetings. There is every reason to welcome the closest possible co-operation in the struggle against terrorism between both parts of the island of Ireland, and between the chief of police of the Garda and the Chief Constable of the RUC. However, it is unnecessary for those meetings to take place within the framework of the intergovernmental conference. Indeed, it would be much more desirable and it would in no way diminish the efficiency of those meetings if the two chiefs of police met separately and not within the framework of the intergovernmental conference.

As I have said before, I hope that Unionist Members who represent Northern Ireland constituencies will take their place in the House and, in the full sense, in the proceedings of Parliament. In the months ahead, I hope that the Government will understand—they understand this barely—how deep is the resentment at the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement on the part of the great majority of people of Northern Ireland. The degree of hostility and resentment to the agreement six months after it was signed is no less than it was on 15 November 1985. I hope that the Government will show a deeper understanding of the feelings of the people of Northern Ireland, and I welcome this opportunity of putting those thoughts to my right hon. Friend.

7.31 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I listened to the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) with care, and I can agree enthusiastically with his plea that Unionist Members rejoin us in the House to play their full part in representing that unhappy and difficult Province.

I wish to draw attention to the question of safety in our older Magnox nuclear power stations, on which we must have assurances before the House goes into recess. I do so in the light of the Chernobyl disaster, but not as a result of it. The issue is not new to me, but one which I have been pursuing with the Central Electricity Generating Board, the nuclear installations inspectorate and the Government during the past 10 months—long before the Chernobyl disaster and the string of three accidents at Hinkley Point close to my constituency, one of which resulted in anti-radiation pills being issued in Britain for only the second time.

Nevertheless, it is curious to see the reactions to the Chernobyl disaster. The Government claim that the public is over-reacting, whereas the public largely sees the Government as complacent in the face of a tragedy of which the reality was terrible enough, but of which the potential was apocalyptic.

I can see the need not to encourage over-reaction, but I have more sympathy with the public on this matter than with the Government. I have come to believe that both the Government and the nuclear industry have shown a degree of complacency over safety in our older Magnox power stations which is extremely worrying.

It is true that British nuclear power stations are much safer than their Soviet equivalents of the same age, but are they safe enough? It is true that our system is much more open, thank goodness, than the Soviet system, but is it sufficiently open in the light of the risks that we face?

We should recognise that there are many similarities between our older Magnox power stations and the Chernobyl reactor. Our seven Magnox stations, which have a total of 18 reactors, are moderated by a graphite core of the same type as that which caught fire with such devastating effects at Chernobyl. A minor leak in a Magnox reactor can generate hydrogen, which is thought to be the cause of the Chernobyl explosion. Many believe that the hydrogen dispersal systems in our older Magnox reactors cannot cope with the large quantities of hydrogen caused by a malfunction, just as appears to have happened at Chernobyl.

It is a chilling thought that in some ways our Magnox reactors may be less safe than the Chernobyl reactor which, being a modern power station, incorporated a number of safety measures not even invented when our Magnox reactors were constructed. Contrary to the misinformation cleverly put about, our Magnox stations have no secondary containment systems, whereas the Chernobyl station had two. Major loops in the radioactive gas coolant systems of our Magnox stations are exposed outside the reactor vessel, whereas all the circuits at Chernobyl were encased inside the containment system. Our Magnox stations have suffered considerably from bellows problems, but no such thing has occurred at Chernobyl. Most important, the design of the circuits which control the Magnox reactor are such that the primary and all emergency shutdown systems can be knocked out at the same time in certain circumstances, for example, if there is a breach in the containment vessel, such as occurred at Chernobyl. In those circumstances, a reactor would be left without instrumentation or a positive means of control in an emergency.

In addition, Magnox stations have suffered from corrosion, sufficiently worrying for the nuclear installations inspectorate to derate the reactors by 17 per cent. some 15 years ago. The corrosion continues. More recently I have been informed that some of the fuel-loading standpipes in our Magnox stations are buckling to such an extent that it is proving difficult to get fuel rods in and out. Apparently, no one yet knows the precise reason for that.

There is a difference of opinion about whether Chernobyl, one of the Soviet Union's most modern power stations, would receive a licence to operate in Britain.

Some say that it would, others say that it would not, and I believe that it would not. However, there is no doubt about the fact that our older Magnox stations would not be licensed to operate in Britain, were they to be considered for that today.

Chernobyl should also have shattered another of our comfortable illusions — that the scale of a nuclear accident will be relatively limited. The tragedy in the Ukraine has shown that our previous calculations about disasters are woefully and, probably, dangerously inadequate. The most recent National Radiological Protection Board study, NRPB-R137 of 1982, predicted that a Chernobyl-type disaster could lead to a gas cloud no more than 75 km in length. The Chernobyl gas cloud was 1,500 km long. The same report made it clear that a radioactive release under circumstances similar to Chernobyl would not last longer than 10 hours and, perhaps, as little as half an hour. The Chernobyl release of radioactivity continued for eight days. Despite those inaccurate predictions, the NRPB has calculated that a 1 per cent. core melt-down — about the same as at Chernobyl — would result in about 10 times as many deaths in Britain as in the USSR because of our much denser population. Given the scale of the tragedy at Chernobyl, that is a chilling thought. However, it should not be surprising, as the Severn valley contains both the highest concentration of nuclear power in the world and the homes of about 8 million people.

Our present emergency planning to cope with nuclear accidents as now revealed would be laughable were it not so potentially tragic. The effects of the Chernobyl disaster were felt more than 1,000 miles away, yet the emergency plan for Hinkley Point stops dead at 2·2 miles from the station perimeter fence. That is extraordinary, but true.

The inadequacies of our older Magnox power stations are not limited to what might happen but also to what is happening. NRPB figures show that the four oldest stations, Berkeley, Bradwell, Hunterston and Hinkley Point, give the highest dose of radiation every day to their workers and the public. Indeed, Berkeley, the worst of the four, exposes members of the public who live closest to it to double the level of radiation suggested as the maximum by the International Commission on Radiological Protection.

In the light of the facts, one would imagine that the Government would take seriously the 20-year safety reviews being conducted on the older Magnox stations. Unhappily, this does not appear to be the case. Not one of these reviews, which were regarded as essential by the original designers of Magnox, has yet been completed, despite the fact that some of the power stations concerned — for instance, Bradwell and Berkeley — reached the 20-year point four years ago. I am informed that there are simply not sufficient inspectors conducting the reviews to enable them to be done thoroughly and within a reasonably short time. These numbers have been depleted even further by the inquiry team that the Government have put together to look into Sellafield's problems.

I have written to the Secretary of State and to the nuclear installations inspectorate over the past months asking for a sign of when the reviews will be completed, but no answer has been forthcoming. Surely, in the light of the Chernobyl tragedy, the Government must now put some emphasis behind these reviews and at least give a target date by which they should be completed.

Worse than that, repeated questions to the Secretary of State asking him to publish the details and results of these reviews when they are known have also been met with refusals. How can we criticise the Soviet Union for secrecy when the result of these essential reviews are also to be kept secret? I hope that the Leader of the House will ensure that the Secretary of State for Energy will give an undertaking to the House before the recess that these details will be published as soon as they are known. If he will not do this, will he at least explain why there needs to be secrecy over such an important matter?

As important as secrecy, however, are the standards by which we shall judge the safety of our older power stations. One would imagine that, in the light of Chernobyl, safety should be judged exclusively on what is necessary. Unhappily, this is far from the case. It appears that only that which is deemed by the CEGB — not the nuclear installations inspectorate — to be credible, practical and not too costly will be done.

In a letter to me of 28 February 1986, the chief inspector of the NII said:

"It is only in situations where we wish the CEGB to do more than they consider to be reasonably practicable that the detailed costs and the likely benefits become a matter for discussion."

This means that the safety standards that we are applying are governed not by what is necessary but by what is not too expensive. Do the Government still find that to be an acceptable standard, after Chernobyl? Later in the same letter in a response to a question from me about why we did not modify our older power stations in the light of recent best practice, the chief inspector said that the extent to which safety

"is achieved will be different for old plant and for new, as in other fields where improvements in safety measures, such as the introduction of seat belts in motor cars are phased in over a period."

Nuclear safety cannot be treated on the same basis as seat belts in cars.

In normal circumstances, engineering standards progress through design, modified by error. However, as Chernobyl has shown, in nuclear engineering there can be no error, so we must adopt a different practice. In nuclear engineering, safety must be an absolute standard, not a relative one. If we learn that new safety measures are required, they should be applied to existing power stations, not kept in the cupboard only to be incorporated when new power stations are built.

The bargain that nuclear power offers us is the kind of bargain offered to Faust, only we are asked to exchange unlimited power for the integrity not of our souls but of our environment. I have the gravest doubt whether mankind should accept that bargain and I am certain that we in Britain, uniquely, do not have to. Whatever one's views on that, no one doubts that the nuclear power stations that we have should be as safe as possible.

In the light of the terrible tragedy that has taken place in the Ukraine, I ask the Government now to do what I have been pressing them to do for months and recognise that our older Magnox stations, such as Hinkley Point, give us no cause for complacency. They must then put sufficient resources into the current safety reviews to do them quickly, establish a target point by which those reviews should be completed and publish the details when they are. I hope that the Leader of the House will be able to ensure that the Secretary of State will give us those undertakings before the House goes into recess for the spring holiday.

7.45 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Before the House adjourns for the spring recess, it is vital that we consider Government policy towards tourism, Britain's fastest growth sector in the economy. Last year, it attracted record numbers of overseas visitors, spending in excess of £5·4 billion. That has helped to create over 50,000 jobs. Tourism is not to be denigrated. Sad to say, we frequently hear from the Opposition Benches phrases such as "Jobs for ice cream salesmen" and "Mickey Mouse jobs." That is not entirely true of all the Opposition, because some right hon. and hon. Members participate in the all-party parliamentary tourism committee and see the benefits of such work. Service is not to be equated with servility. These are permanent jobs in an exciting sector.

I hold the elected offices of secretary of the all-party parliamentary tourism committee and vice chairman of the Conservative parliamentary tourism committee, and I declare my parliamentary consultancy for Consort hotels.

Naturally, terrorism has been a factor this year. Visitor cancellations from the United States have reached 40 per cent. in some quarters, but that is not surprising. Last summer's hijacking of a TWA flight in Athens, the seizure of the Achille Lauro cruise ship, the December deaths at airports in Rome and Vienna and the Libyan action this year have led to too many North Americans considering Britain in the same context. The media photographs of troops and armed police at Heathrow airport have not dispelled that opinion.

I acknowledge that there have been cancellations, but the United States market here needs to be put into perspective. The boom year for United States visitors was 1985. There were 3·3 million American visitors, exceeding all previous records. The strengthening of sterling against the United States dollar has been a significant factor. Long-term growth will continue despite these temporary setbacks. However, only 25 per cent. of overseas visitors to the United Kingdom originate in the United States of America. Most of the cancellations are from the group travel, youth and incentive markets. As some 80 per cent. of United States visitors travel independently, the scare stories may not materialise.

I praise the action taken by the British Tourist Authority. By participating in more than 100 radio and television interviews throughout the United States through the European Travel Commission, it will have dispelled some of the adverse criticism. Furthermore, the BTA's 18-city roadshow, travelling coast to coast, helps travel agents to appreciate our good security record. In addition, key travel trade leaders have been brought to Britain.

I particularly commend the regional initiatives. The Yorkshire and Humberside tourist board is helping to sell the north of England as a destination, using Manchester as a gateway. For example, there is the British Airways New York to Manchester service. The quality of welcome is assured.

Where is the Government initiative in all this? We need a Minister who will use his full abilities to market Britain. Immediately after the first adverse signs of terrorism, the Minister should have called together his opposite numbers in all the EEC states. Furthermore, we want a Minister who will bring together all parties to create a national tourism week. The goal is to increase awareness among consumers and Government officials at local, regional and national levels, of tourism's importance to the economic, social and cultural welfare of the United Kingdom. This coming Sunday sees the launch of a similar programme in the United States of America. I hope that the Government will follow its activities and create a similar momentum here.

I appreciate that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment has difficulty in devoting adequate time to this key sector of the economy. His other responsibilities include small businesses, which he promotes with skill. However, the time is overdue to give sole responsibility for tourism to one Minister. Does the industry deserve anything less?

There is still a lack of co-ordination between Departments. I have calculated for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that 13 Government Departments —a good baker's dozen—are involved. The two most glaring gaps are the lack of co-operation between the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Employment, the sponsoring Department for tourism, and that between the Home Office and the Department of Employment on the reform of alcoholic drinks legislation.

On the former, there is still too wide a gulf on advising schoolchildren and youngsters who have recently left school on job opportunities in tourism. Last autumn, I visited two sixth forms in York schools. Not one hand went up when I asked what was meant by the service sector of the economy. When it was explained, none had considered tourism as a career. Yet, apart occasionally from the armed forces, what sector can offer such an opportunity in terms of responsibility, travel, prospects and emoluments? It is amazing that hoteliers need to seek personnel from outside the United Kingdom.

There is too little support for undergraduate and post-graduate management studies for tourism and the hotel and catering industry. A few companies have proved willing recently to finance students through their entire courses. I would single out for praise in this connection Trust House Forte, Grand Metropolitan, Crest Hotels and Swallow Hotels.

Moving to the adverse side, let us consider what assistance we give visitors at the Channel ports. We compare badly with the continentals. If my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has recently visited the Channel ports, he will have seen the dangers inherent in sloppy or loose Customs work.

There must be an exercise of discretion in some cases, because many tourists are senior citizens and are often not fit. Visitors must physically pick up their luggage at Dover and Folkestone, because there are few trolleys. I believe that Customs officers should come on board coaches and use some discretion.

Another factor could be the requirement by other EEC states for nonsensicial documents to try to make life as difficult as possible for tour managers. I cite the regulation that the French Government tourist office resuscitated in an endeavour to prohibit progress across France and limited it to persons who had taken the French examination —the national certificate for guide interpretation. That deals with history, but requires no practical experience as a tour manager.

Tour managers in Italy are required to buy an "attestazione" for about £10 from the Italian consulate in Britain before they can take groups to Italy. That is not a large sum of money. People of other nationalities are not hindered in bringing groups into the United Kingdom. It has been known for tour managers to be put in gaol if they

they do not have those documents. Only a Spanish national can commence a tour in Spain. There is no such limitation here. There are also difficulties in Greece, where tour managers can be challenged by local guides. I also cite the requirement that United Kingdom nationals visiting the United States must have a visa. There is no reciprocity. I hope that my right hon. Friend will make appropriate representations so that the four or five most secure European states can enjoy a similar move.

A crucial area of tourism, if we are to succeed in the long term, is classification and registration. There is a plethora of guides, from the RAC, AA, Michelin and Gault Millau to Egon Ronay, and now we have yet another scheme that appears to be supported partly by quangos financed by the British taxpayer. We have moved away from stars, which are well understood, to a system of crowns. Not content with sea horses in the Isle of Wight and hearts in the heart of England, we now have crowns. Everyone likes to be upgraded when they provide services above their ability. Now we find the nonsense of three-star hotels getting five-crown status. Therefore, the American traveller or—I hope increasingly—the Japanese traveller visiting his travel agent in Chicago or Tokyo will book accommodation, and the travel agent will equate a five-crown hotel in the north of Scotland or in mid-Wales with a five-crown hotel on Park lane. There will be no form of differentiation using that ill-conceived scheme. We are storing up a major problem for the future.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will take on board my points. The spring Adjournment would be a fitting occasion for him to dwell upon the detailed and specific points that I have tried to bring to his attention.

7.54 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): It would be useful, before the House goes into recess, to discuss the implications of last Thursday's local election results. No one in the Government could deny that the Tory party received a massive rejection by the electorate. It was certainly not a vote of confidence, and clearly shows a tremendous desire for political change. That is not surprising. Mass unemployment continues and there is no sign that the measures, so modest as hardly to count, contained in the Budget will affect unemployment. More and more people understand that, by the time of the general election, the number of unemployed will be the same as now, and indeed is likely to be more. The continuing cuts in health and education help to explain the rejection of Tory candidates in last Thursday's poll.

Some Tory politicians blame the election results on the failure in presentation of policies. That was not the position. The policies themselves were being rejected. Most people are sick and tired of what is widely seen as Thatcherism, and sometimes that mood is explained in more vivid language on the doorstep. There is a wish—a deep-seated desire — for change, and all the advertising techniques of Saatchi and Saatchi are unlikely to change that mood before the general election.

Yesterday, the Leader of the House took the opportunity of a television programme to make some interesting observations on the state of the Conservative party——

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Hear, hear.

Mr. Winnick: At least one Conservative Member says "Hear, hear".

Mr. Hickmet: I agree that my right hon. Friend's observations were interesting.

Mr. Winnick: It would be useful if the Leader of the House made some of those observations in the Chamber, not just on television. I do not criticise the right hon. Gentleman; he was right to appear on that programme.

If the Conservative party won the general election—a most unlikely event, I would think — the right hon. Gentleman believes that the Prime Minister would not remain in that position until the end of the next Parliament. Is that the Prime Minister's view? Before he made those observations, did he consult the right hon. Lady? After all, only the other day the Prime Minister told us that she was just halfway through her premiership—hardly a sign that if the Conservative party won the election she would resign after a short time. Obviously, the right hon. Gentleman's comments aroused much political interest.

Was the Leader of the House really saying to the electors that they should not worry, and that if the Tories won the next election the country need not put up with the Prime Minister for too long? Was that a warning sign to Tories and to the electorate? If so, it does not show much confidence in the Prime Minister from one of her most senior Ministers.

Perhaps tonight the right hon. Gentleman would also enlighten us about what he called the balanced ticket, and whom he considers among those he described as his powerful colleagues will become the next leader. I wonder whether, with all his becoming modesty, he excluded himself. Who did he have in mind? Who among these powerful colleagues will take over from the Prime Minister? It would be interesting if he would use this opportunity to tell us more. My advice to him—I do not know whether he requires advice—is not to be so keen to exclude himself. Perhaps he would be the person most likely to draw the warring factions together.

What did the Leader of the House mean when he said that the fact that the party had a dominant figure did not mean that it benefited at a general election? Was that remark cleared by No. 10? What about the right hon. Gentleman's repeated criticism of his party chairman? The Leader of the House is quoted as saying that the message has to be conveyed in more measured tones and not in a hysterical manner. I sometimes wonder whether the chairman of the Conservative party is not subjected to more criticism from certain of his Cabinet colleagues, such as the Leader of the House, than from Opposition Members. But it would be interesting to know what was in the mind of the Leader of the House when he said that.

My remarks are not to be taken as any criticism by Ministers of a frank discussion of what happened last Thursday. It is right and proper that the Leader of the House should use the opportunity presented by the media to explain matters. I am not criticising that at all. He was rather frank, but then I am suggesting only that he should be equally frank with the House. Understandably, I am not a fan of the chairman of the Tory party——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will relate his remarks to whether the House should go into recess.

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful for that guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My point is that, before the recess, there

[Mr. Winnick]

should be ample opportunity for a debate on the Government's position after the rebuff that they received at the polls last Thursday. It might be unfair, but the image portrayed by the chairman of the Conservative party is very much that portrayed on "Spitting Image"—that of a real toughie in a black leather zipped jacket. But it is not his fault that the Government's policies are being rejected. They are being rejected because they are wrong, and are seen to be wrong.

The Government's policies have caused tremendous devastation throughout the country. If the Leader of the House is trying to persuade his Cabinet colleague to change his style, I should tell him that he is unlikely to succeed. In an interview yesterday, the chairman of the Conservative party made it clear that he was not going to change his style at all, so we shall have to wait and see who wins that battle.

You questioned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether my remarks were relevant. But one relevant debate is that taking place in the Cabinet between those who believe that there should be tax cuts and those who believe that it would be wrong to take measures that would further cut essential community services. I understand that the Leader of the House takes the latter standpoint. Our policy is clear. We believe that, first and foremost, services should be protected. I have already mentioned health and education, but hon. Members should not forget that council house building has been severely cut. In many parts of the country, including my borough, no council house building is going on. That partly explains the defeat last Thursday, when the electors had a limited opportunity to pass their verdict on the Government.

The Leader of the House initiated, albeit on television, a very interesting debate. That debate will continue, and there will no doubt be endless opportunities, right up to the election, for us to persuade the country about the rights and wrongs of Government policy. But I believe that the electorate has largely made up its mind. I am not at all complacent. Clearly, my party will have to do yet more persuading in order to ensure that it has a clear majority in the House after that election. The duty of the Leader of the House is first and foremost to the House, and he should tell us now what he has in mind and develop further the interesting and frank remarks that he made in yesterday's interview.

8.4 pm

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Perhaps we should reconsider Cyprus before rising for the recess. In, I think, 1984, I raised the question of Cyprus for the first time in a similar debate, and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House was on the Front Bench then, too. For all its small population and size, that island has had the attention of the United Nations, the Foreign Office, the State Department and various other western and eastern chancelleries for a disproportionate amount of time.

In recent history, there are certain key dates. For example, in 1955 we had the EOKA movement for union with Greece. In 1960, there was the independence of Cyprus. In 1963, there was the rejection of the constitution when Archbishop Makarios was president of the island. From 1963 to 1974 we had the denial of human rights to the Turkish minority, and 1974 saw the coup d'etat organised by the Greek colonels in Athens, which established Mr. Nikos Samson as president of that island, with the ensuing Turkish intervention.

Since 1974, the island has been divided, with the Turkish minority living in the north and the Greeks living in the south. For the past two years the United Nations Secretary-General has used his good offices to attempt to negotiate a solution to the Cyprus problem. During those two years, he has dealt with Mr. Denktash and Mr. Kyprianou, and with Mr. Papandreou and the Turkish Prime Minister, Mr. Ozal. Of course, as a guarantor power of the 1960 constitution, Great Britain has been involved.

But in the recent history of the island's political problems there is another critical date. Despite all the efforts, the United Nations has failed to bring the two sides together. In January last year, it was fervently hoped in New York that the so-called heads of agreement would be accepted by both sides. They were certainly accepted by Mr. Denktash, but when President Kyprianou went to New York he felt unable to accept the proposals put forward by the United Nations Secretary-General. For a further year or 14 months the Secretary-General has endeavoured to bring together the two sides and to establish a framework through which a lasting solution can be evolved.

Although that plan was accepted by Mr. Denktash, it was again rejected, in effect, by Mr. Kyprianou. Indeed, he says that four points must be discussed at an international conference, suggested, incidentally, by the Soviet Union, before there can be any outline agreement. Those four points are: the withdrawal of Turkish troops; international guarantees for the island's independence; the removal of Turkish settlers since 1974; and the three freedoms.

We have got nowhere if the Greeks are maintaining that position after two years of negotiation. The Government, the Foreign Secretary and his Foreign Office Ministers can no longer go on saying that they support the good offices of the United Nations Secretary-General in his attempt to resolve the dispute. There can be no question of withdrawal of Turkish troops. That was accepted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the proposals he put forward. The guarantees and rights of the Turkish minority were ignored from 1963 to 1974 when the Turkish intervention took place.

Turkey will never renounce its right to be a guarantor of the rights of the Turkish minority because, were it to do so and a situation arose such as occurred in 1963 or 1974, Turkey would have no rights in international law to protect its minority. The three freedoms—movement, the right of abode and the right of a place to work—cannot be accepted as a precursor. That is something which must evolve. When two communities are separated in terms of economic strength, when one is much stronger and more numerous than the other, there must be some control before those so-called freedoms can be given.

If ever there was a time that the Cyprus issue should be debated, surely it must be before we adjourn. The good offices of the United Nations Secretary-General have been rejected. Where do we go from here? It is not good enough for my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, when pressed on the issue by the Government and the Opposition, to say, "We continue to support the United Nations Secretary-General and his good offices." That has failed. The international conference suggested by Mr. Papandreou was a Soviet proposal. The Soviets want the removal of British bases from the island.

It is important to identify what is in the national interests of the United Kingdom. It must be the preservation of the NATO Alliance and NATO's position on the south-eastern flank. The dispute has continued to weaken and debilitate the south-eastern flank of NATO, with Greece and Turkey rattling the sabre and being at one another's throats. There is a large army maintained by the Greeks in the Aegean islands and an air force, and there are similar large forces opposing them around Izmir. That is a waste of resources. More importantly, that source of international tension and weakness of the NATO Alliance cannot be allowed to continue if NATO is to present a credible defence in this part of the world.

I say in all sincerity that the time has come for the British Government to shift their position. Everyone has tried to achieve a solution which would result in a bi-zonal, bi-communal, federated state in Cyprus. That was rejected by Greek Cypriots and Mr. Papandreou. It was accepted by Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish Government. It was the proposal of the United Nations Secretary-General. It was supported by the State Department and our Prime Minister. If that solution is not accepted, we cannot continue, year after year, with the tension that exists in this part of the eastern Mediterranean, while at the same time denying to the Turkish minority in the north certain basic fundamental human rights. Those people are unable to obtain a passport. They have no developed economy, no international aid and no real trading links. I believe that the time has come for some limited form of recognition, if only to persuade the Greeks that the time has come for them to moderate their view.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Disgraceful.

Mr. Hickmet: My hon. Friend says that it is disgraceful, but I must tell him that I know a great deal about the matter. Many of my friends have died defending the interests of the Turkish minority community. We all hold firm and passionate views, but I am trying to express myself objectively.

I think that the time has come for some limited form of recognition — for example, direct air flights from London to the Turkish part of northern Cyprus—if only to persuade the Greeks that the time has come to shift. We cannot continue saying that the status quo is such as it is and we must support the United Nations Secretary-General's initiative. It is over; it has failed. The time has come for the British Government, who have a historic responsibility as the guarantor of the 1960 constitution, and as a former colonial power, to take some positive action.

8.14 pm

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): I rise briefly to press on the Leader of the House the fact that the recess is a little premature. Despite the easing of the Government's timetable, with the defeat of the Shops Bill, the Government have not found time to discuss important matters. I shall not join my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) in analysing too deeply a television programme on which the Leader of the House appeared on Sunday. Indeed, I shall pass over that, because I know that the right hon. Gentleman is a good party man. He always plays a sound innings for his side. In fact, I defended him earlier today when one of my colleagues said that he had been on for about 10 minutes before he realised that it was not a soap commercial overruning its time. I took my colleague to task for making such an unkind remark.

Before the House rises, we need to develop two themes. On Second Reading of the Finance Bill I said that the Budget was designed primarily to appeal to the 27 million people in work and that it very much ignored the 4 million people who are out of work. That position is reflected in microcosm in the city of Bristol, which I have the honour to represent. The general unemployment rate of 12·4 per cent. in the south-west is one of the lowest regional statistics. Although the south-west is a pleasant place in which to tour and holiday, it does conceal serious pockets of unemployment to which the House should give attention.

On the northern side of Bristol there are some prosperous areas, such as Stoke Bishop and Westbury on Trym where the unemployment rate is 2 or 3 per cent. In my constituency there are areas, such as Filwood Knowle West and Hartcliffe, where the adult unemployment rate is over 25 per cent. Those are serious and debilitating circumstances for those communities. In an area of high unemployment in my constituency, a further attack has been made on the work force. I refer to the tobacco factory at Hartcliffe and the swingeing increase in cigarette tax in the last Budget. I shall not dwell on that, because the Committee which is considering the Finance Bill will deal with clause 1 tomorrow. As clause 1 encompasses that area, I shall speak at greater length then. The matter is extremely worrying. While it may satisfy a number of people that they are doing good at second hand, I repeat the warning I gave on Second Reading of the Finance Bill: after the attack on the tobacco industry there will come a concerted assault from the same quarter on the drinks industry.

During the recent local elections, when Labour regained control of Bristol, in each contested seat there was a candidate from the newly titled Green party. It was interesting to note from the results a clear relationship between the size of the Green party candidate's vote and the prosperity of the area in which the candidate stood. In the more comfortably off, middle-class areas, there was a much larger Green party vote, because people were doing reasonably well and could exercise their conscience. They could feel that they were doing their whack for the environment before they carried on as before. In areas such as my own, there was a more realistic attitude and people predominantly voted Labour.

Before the House rises we should discuss not only work opportunities but the provision of facilities. My predecessor, Will Wilkins, who represented my seat from 1945 to 1970 and who is, I am happy to say, alive and well, fought throughout his time as a Member of Parliament for a hospital, the establishment of which was first recommended in 1935. Since 1970, I have continued that fight. Although at long last there are hopeful signs, I shall really think that we have arrived only when I see the foundations dug and the concrete poured.

I should like to raise another point which, although comparatively minor, shows the scale of the problems that we should consider. At one time, one presses for a hospital and at another for a pedestrian crossing. For two years —this may sound incredible—I have been trying to get a pedestrian crossing on Leinster avenue, Knowle West. People are very anxious about the traffic, and I hope that

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something will be done. The general feeling is that the area should have a fair crack of the whip. That is the type of matter we should discuss before the House rises.

I shall not say that my area has never been offered anything. A few years ago, I and a number of residents and local bodies had to attend a public inquiry because the county council had offered us a gipsy site on Airport road. Although I understand the need to provide gipsy sites, I believe that, when one is constantly pressing for a hospital, a pedestrian crossing or better school, it is not appropriate for the authorities to say, "The people can have something —here it is."

I ask the Leader of the House to reconsider his batting order before the House rises and to give us an opportunity to debate such issues. Unless we as a country seriously consider these inequalities, there will be an imbalance in society which will be disruptive, divisive and, in the end, destructive.

8.21 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I should like to take my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House back to the events of 25 March this year when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry came to the House to give the final judgment on the intended merger of British Leyland and General Motors in the truck and freight divisions. I should like to plead with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for hon. Members to be given more information before the House rises on events since that date, on whether there have been meetings in the United Kingdom or in the United States, and, if so, on whether those meetings have borne fruit.

At that time, several statements were made and we had one major debate and other minor debates on the subject. The matter was surrounded by a great deal of emotion and the debate degenerated into an emotional argument rather than focusing on reality. That is why I welcome this brief opportunity in the relative calm and peace of the Chamber, when we are considering the chance to go away for a few days, not necessarily to go over some of the old agruments but to reflect on what happened, on what went wrong and on the future of General Motors and of Bedford Trucks, especially in and around my constituency.

The debate was marked by the extraordinary performance of the Opposition, especially by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who performed the most extraordinary gymnastics not only in the House but outside it in the constituencies of my right hon. and hon. Friends. The right hon. and learned Gentleman as much as anyone made the Government change their mind. He must take the blame if jobs in those areas are lost. Although one could understand the anxieties of midlands Members about the future of their constituents and firms in their constituencies, one could never forgive the aspersions that the Opposition cast on General Motors. Those comments went home deeply.

The debate and the future of the truck industry must be seen in the light of our over-capacity. Everything that has been said in this place in the past few weeks and months has not changed that fact. We are over-producing trucks by 40 per cent. The future of the truck industry in the United Kingdom is at risk. The decision to let GM look elsewhere means that the prospect is that, within the next few years, truck manufacturing in this country will end. The House, especially the Government, should take note of that warning which was given today to me by a senior GM executive. As was announced during our discussions, Ford was going to Iveco. We know full well that BL will ask for further public investment to keep the truck industry going. GM's future must be uncertain because it has not been able to rationalise and go ahead with the merger with BL.

Political mistakes were made, but what went wrong after my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry welcomed GM's initiative? In earlier statements, he encouraged hon. Members who were involved in the matter to think that the merger would receive Government approval. On 5 February, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, stated:

"If we miss our chance, we could be throwing away a golden opportunity to build on the foundations that have been laid. If we do not build on those foundations, we may never build."—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. 346.]

I hope that my hon. Friend's words were not too ominous, but I fear that they might have been.

The initial moves by my right hon. Friend the chairman of the Conservative party—the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit)—when he was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in an over-capacity market, might well go against BL which accepted vast sums of public money and produced a worthwhile product but had little future because of the state of the market. I say with regret that perhaps my right hon. Friends in Cabinet showed a certain amount of political cowardice, but I believe that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House must understand the deep feelings in Luton, Dunstable and surrounding areas about the events. We were given certain assurances, but they were cast to the wind.

Some notable right hon. Friends, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), made some disturbing comments. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup made a forceful speech in which he referred to a European option, as though it might be better to go to bed with the Italians, the Spaniards or the Germans than with the Americans. It is ironic that many of the complaints to the House—many of them justified—about foreign imports have concerned cheap cars from Spain, Germany and Italy. My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) implied in his own way that we could not fully trust General Motors' word. Those of us who have known GM well—Vauxhall Motors has been in Luton for 83 years and Bedford Trucks for 55 years—thought that those remarks were somewhat unfortunate.

Why, therefore, did the Government change their mind when they heard the siren voices from both sides of the House, in particular the siren voices of their own supporters? I remind my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House of the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who said:

"Is my right hon. Friend"—

that was the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—

"aware that a majority of Conservative Members regret the collapse of the General Motors talks, as a great opportunity lost?"

I hear my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) agreeing with that sentiment. He intervened earlier on a similar theme. My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling continued:

"Would it not have been better for the Government to concentrate on securing a successful motor industry in Britain rather than to respond to the misguided and jingoistic calls from those who will leave a price to be paid in lost jobs and higher taxes?"—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 798.]

The Government's decision will undoubtedly mean a loss of jobs and higher taxes as money is poured into keeping British Leyland afloat.

The Opposition's behaviour at that time was remarkable. It began with the scaremongering tactics of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). He thought that he had found a scoop and that it provided a chance to get on to the front page of the newspapers. However, that fact had been known in the Luton and Dunstable area for several months before his intervention. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, throughout the statements and debates, persisted in denigrating General Motors and all that it had done for employment and investment in this country.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman called General Motors a predator. He accused it of putting company interests above the national interest. He visited various public meetings, including one in an adjoining constituency, where he stirred up the fears of many trade union members about what would happen if General Motors went ahead with its merger with British Leyland. I say to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that if one job is lost, as I am afraid it will be, in the Luton and Dunstable area, the loss of that first job and of succeeding jobs will be laid right at his feet because of the policy that he pursued at that time. When it happens, I hope that he will be able to sleep quietly in his bed. I shall be unable to do so because it will mean that my constituents will have lost their jobs.

The House will recall the enormous amount of anti-American feeling that was generated on the Opposition Benches. I remember that one Opposition Member called the Americans "a foreign body." Many aspersions were cast upon the integrity of General Motors.

I have represented that area for seven years and have lived in it all my life. Therefore, I cannot underestimate the value of Vauxhall Motors and Bedford Trucks to that part of the country. They have been excellent employers. They have had their problems, which means that they have had to make fairly large numbers of people redundant. However, in virtually every case they were voluntary redundancies. The companies looked after those who lost their jobs in a way that provides an example to employers elsewhere in the country.

They have not asked for public money. In recent times Luton received £5 million of public money, while Ellesmere Port received £150 million. That is peanuts compared with the vast sums of money that have been poured into British Leyland. They have made a contribution to the community in the surrounding areas that is second to none. Only today I was privileged to attend a showing to the public of its new synthetic pitch by Luton Town football club. The pitch was donated to the club by Bedford Trucks. It is being used by the local community to such an extent that it is fully booked until the autumn. It has brought the local football club, which suffered tremendously after the unfortunate incidents at the Luton-Millwall game, at which I was present, back into the community.

Let nobody say that Vauxhall Motors and Bedford Trucks have not done a tremendous amount for the people of Luton and Dunstable. They have sponsored numerous events which have provided encouragement to the youth of the area. The have put money into Lilleshall and encouraged the Football Association's school of football there. The number of local charitable projects that they have supported is far too long for me to list. Their record is excellent. Those hon. Members with constituencies in that area were very sad to hear of the various aspersions that were cast upon them during those debates and statements.

I remind the House that it was Bedford Trucks which donated 50 trucks to the relief organisation during the recent famine relief exercise in Ethiopia and the Sudan. They were offered in the same spirit as was shown during the war.

The tragedy of the General Motors debate is that the undertakings that were given by the company were never fully understood by the House. It is possible that they were never fully understood by the Government. Certainly those undertakings were conveniently ignored by the Opposition. General Motors gave an absolute undertaking that if a merger took place between British Leyland's truck division and General Motors the majority of the products sold to businesses in the United Kingdom would be manufactured in the United Kingdom. Let the House never forget that the British content of Bedford Trucks is far higher than that in the case of Vauxhall.

A second undertaking was given that General Motors would make a substantial additional investment in that industry. That would have safeguarded jobs, even if it did not create jobs. The House should never forget, furthermore, that this country invests £38 billion in the United States, whereas the United States invests £33 billion in this country. We know which gets the better return on its money—this country. The amount of cross-investment between the two countries is enormous.

The third and probably the most important undertaking that General Motors gave, which would have had a most dramatic impact in the area that I represent, was that it would set up its European headquarters in the Luton and Dunstable area. That would have meant an increase in research and development, which at the moment creates work for about 1,000 employees.

Despite the questions, statements and supportive noises made by my right hon. and hon. Friends with constituencies in the area, in particular by my hon. Friends the Members for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) and for Luton, South (Mr. Bright), we lost the argument. Therefore, I must ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House what is to happen now. What is to be the established plan for trucks? I should like my right hon. Friend to tell my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that there is still a chance that General Motors will come back to the negotiating table. Immense damage was created by the attitude that was adopted towards the company. The fact that the talks ended so abruptly was very hurtful. It was similar to the hurt felt by a bride who is led to the altar and then suddenly turned away.

May we have a statement from my hon. Friend the Minister of State about his talks in New York on 4 May with Mr. Robert Stemper, the head of General Motors? My hon. Friend should come to the House and report on exactly what was said at that meeting. It is not too late for this particular suitor to return. If the truck industry in this country is to survive and thrive, General Motors must be

[Mr. John Carlisle]

part of the future programme. To those who have studied these matters and been closely involved in them during the past few months, it seems that the only hope for the trucks division of British Leyland is a merger with General Motors, unless the taxpayer is to continue to pick up the tab—a tab that will grow in size.

Therefore, I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to make time before the recess for this very important matter to be aired once again and for the House to be told at what point the negotiations stand. I hope that he will say to General Motors that, although the deal was called off on 25 March, we are still interested in the future of the industry and that the Government want General Motors to come back again and talk to us.

8.38 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I can understand the anxieties of the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) about the condition of the motor industry in his part of the world. I can also understand the acute embarrassment that he and his hon. Friends must feel at the fact that their constituencies may now face the sort of deprivation and suffering that have been felt in other parts of the country, not least in Scotland in recent years with the closure of factories such as Linwood. I hope that that kind of disaster does not befall the people of Luton, but the hon. Gentleman cannot avoid his share of the responsibility for the economic policies that the Government whom he supports have been pursuing over the years and that have led to that kind of disaster.

The hon. Gentleman is entitled to pursue his constituency point and I hope that the House will bear with me and understand why I am anxious to raise another national, but at the same time constituency, point which should be debated before the House considers rising for the recess.

Other hon. Members have already referred to the concern that is felt in many parts of the United Kingdom about nuclear power stations following the disaster at Chernobyl in the Soviet Union. People are understandably concerned about the condition of our ageing Magnox power stations. People are acutely concerned about the Government's proposals to go ahead with the construction of pressurised water reactors at Sizewell and elsewhere, depending on the outcome of the public inquiry. People are becoming increasingly worried about the disposal of waste. The secrecy surrounding the industry is contributing more than anything else to that concern.

My constituents in East Lothian are especially anxious, because the incident at Chernobyl has coincided with the arrival of the first consignment of nuclear fuel at the new advanced gas-cooled reactor station at Torness in my constituency. Over the years we have had many assurances from many worthy people, Ministers and scientists about the safety of nuclear installations. How often have they told us that that kind of incident could not happen; that it is inconceivable; that it is impossible? Well, it does happen.

We have seen what almost turned into a disaster at Three Mile Island in the United States. We have now seen a serious accident in the Soviet Union, which seems likely to have far-reaching effects in the immediate vicinity of the nuclear reactor. When I talk about the immediate vicinity I am talking about a radius of hundreds of miles rather than tens of miles. We are even being told here, more than 1,000 miles away, that we should be careful before drinking rainwater and we have seen people testing samples of milk. That shows the concern that exists, despite all the assurances.

Not only do accidents seem to have occurred after those assurances have been given over and over again by the nuclear lobby, but it keeps emerging that accidents happened before those assurances were given by the nuclear lobby. For instance, news of the accident at Windscale in 1957 emerged many years afterwards.

People seem to be either strongly in favour of nuclear power or strongly against it. I make no apology for the fact that I have tended to be an agnostic on this subject. I am in no way qualified to pontificate on whether it is right or wrong, safe or unsafe. That is a matter for scientists and for those who are supposed to be able to lead and advise us as decision-makers on these matters.

Therefore, seven or eight years ago, when we were advised that there was a need for a new power station in Scotland and that is was advisable for that to be an AGR, I was prepared to accept that advice. Indeed, I was prepared to say that if a new power station was to be constructed in Scotland I was delighted that it would be in my constituency because we needed the employment.

That building is now going ahead apace. Indeed, it is nearly complete. I have tended—I stress that I use the past tense — to want to believe that the people who advise us on this subject are not malicious and that they are not deliberately trying to mislead us about safety and the need to construct more and more power stations. But, there we are. The power station at Torness is virtually complete. Many billions of pounds have been spent and many of us feel that we have been let down and misled by the authorities and the South of Scotland Electricity Board on a whole range of aspects of that power station.

Employment has been of interest in my constituency. We were told that the construction of that power station would create a vast number of local jobs. Yet, throughout its construction, many local people, whose last jobs had been in the construction industry, could not find employment on that construction site while people were coming in from all parts of Britain and beyond to work there. That was an assurance which did not seem to be fulfilled in the way that many of us had hoped.

Now we still have all the general assurances about safety and about the fact that the waste material from the power station can be safely handled and disposed of. In the context of let-downs in the past and of what happened at Chernobyl two or three weeks ago there is growing concern in my constituency and that is being expressed to me in letters from my constituents, supporters of all parties. That point was expressed to me by a number of people during the course of the local election campaigns last week. People are deeply worried about the possible implications of living next door to such a plant.

Another aspect to the argument is whether there is an urgent need to commission a new power station of any description in Scotland at present. If Torness were to be commissioned next year, we would have more than 100 per cent. more generating capacity in Scotland than we are likely to need at the maximum possible peak load in the coldest imaginable winter. Why on earth is there a mad rush to go ahead with commissioning that power station now? That is, at best, insensitive and, at worst, something far worse than that. We have massive overcapacity. The

commissioning of a new power station could only put existing perhaps conventional coal-burning power stations elsewhere in Scotland at risk. What is the sense of doing that?

I have already mentioned that the first nuclear fuel was delivered to Torness well ahead of schedule two weeks ago. What on earth is the hurry in commissioning that power station? We do not need it immediately. We may need it in due course. It may be possible to satisfy everybody that it is safe, but is it prudent or defensible to go ahead with loading a power station of that nature at a time like this?

I am not just raising this point now because of the pressure that has blown up over the past couple of weeks. I made an identical point when I gave evidence to the public inquiry on the handling of waste from Torness over a year ago when I suggested that questions about safety still had to be answered and that, as there was no urgent need to commission the power station, it would be sensible and prudent to postpone activity on that site until proper answers could be given to such questions.

I hope that the Leader of the House understands the point that I am making. I hope that the Government are aware of the serious concern in my constituency and, indeed, in neighbouring constituencies on this point. I should be grateful for any information that can be given, if not by the Leader of the House this evening, perhaps by the Secretary of State for Scotland as soon as possible. What is the timetable now for loading Torness power station? It appears to be going ahead of schedule. No official press release was given by the South of Scotland Electricity Board to the effect that nuclear fuel had been brought on to the site. It seemed to be brought in rather surreptitiously, well ahead of schedule.

My constituents, I, and indeed the House are entitled to know a little more about the Government's proposals to deal with our electricity needs in the coming years. Are coal-burning power stations secure and shall we have a properly independent and properly funded inspectorate looking after the safety of nuclear power stations in Britain? Is it not now time to think again about expanding Britain's nuclear generating capacity?

8.49 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I did not come here to discuss the future of Cyprus. My many Greek Cypriot constituents who lost relatives, friends and homes in the armed struggle to regain their homeland have another, more serious problem facing them—posed, this time, by the British Government.

However, I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) would be disappointed if I did not pick up the gauntlet that he threw down. He asked my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to refer to the problem of Cyprus before we adjourned, and he mentioned the Turkish intervention in the island in 1974. The House knows full well that that was an invasion, not an intervention.

My hon. Friend referred to the legitimate demands of the Greek Cypriot people as some sort of Soviet plot. I remind the House that the Greek Cypriots want three freedoms — freedom of movement, freedom of abode and freedom of the right to work. My political dictionary has never included those three freedoms as civil rights that are ardently fought for in the Soviet Union.

The Greek Cypriots have rightly made one other demand. They demand the withdrawal of the thousands-strong garrison of Turkish troops in northern Cyprus who are illegally occupying that island and, in many cases, the homes of some of my constituents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe was right to ask for movement by the British Government. Our Government should encourage a move towards federation and the three freedoms for Greek and Turkish Cypriots so that they, the natural inhabitants of the island, may enjoy the freedom of their home.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will remember that I suggested to him during business questions last week that the House should debate tourism, an industry on which, as my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) said, many jobs depend and which is under siege. My right hon. Friend suggested that tonight would be the appropriate time for that debate. I welcome the excellent contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for York, but I still believe that the subject should be debated in a full House and in Government time.

My hon. Friend the Member for York criticised some of the facilities that this country provides for tourists, and he mentioned specifically the Customs facilities of the Channel ports. Unless the House takes rigorous action in the near future, those facilities are likely to become academic.

The matter that I wish to discuss particularly is the future of the Channel fixed link. The fixed link depends for its economic success on the elimination and theft of business in the Channel ports. Without that business, the fixed link will not be economically viable. If the fixed link survives, the Channel ports will go under, and if they go under the question of Customs facilities at those ports will become academic.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) mentioned the effects of a fixed link on the developing port of Ramsgate. I endorse his comments. I should like the House to consider the effects of a fixed link on my constituency where we see some possible short-term gains through the provision of bed-night accommodation for construction workers, but beyond that we see a long-term loss.

We fear that we shall suffer that long-term loss unless the road infrastructure in north-east Kent—particularly the Thanet Way and the Ramsgate harbour approach road —is modernised. Unless the Department of Transport and the Kent county council address themselves to that need not as an afterthought but as a priority, the tunnel route will become the north-east Kent bypass and the fragile recovery of the area will fail.

We heard in the previous debate about the difficulties of the north-west of England. I did not intervene in that debate, but I understand those difficulties particularly well, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South, because we face not the unemployment of the north-west, but male unemployment of 27 per cent. From the Kentish coast we see French money being poured into the Nord Pas de Calais region. I suggest that the choice is not between jobs for the north or south of England, but between jobs for Kent or for France. It is up to our Government to give us the opportunity that the French Government are giving to Nord Pas de Calais.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South referred to the growing secrecy surrounding the Channel tunnel project. The Department of Transport's Channel tunnel

[Mr. Roger Gale]

consultative committee hearings are beginning to take on a bunker quality. As my hon. Friend said, the Channel Tunnel Group's figures are public knowledge. So where are the Government's figures? It is not surprising that Lord Pennock seeks to blame this House for his company's financial frustrations. The City is, indeed, running scared. The golden goose is not laying golden eggs; it is dropping bricks.

I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for the protection normally afforded to Back Benchers. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport said that the hybrid Bill procedure

"contains every opportunity for those affected to be heard".

He said that the procedure

"is a substantial and thorough procedure which ensures that the public have the widest opportunity to make representations as petitioners to the two Select Committees".—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 645.]

My right hon. Friend's "Invitation to Promoters", published later in December, said:

"It is an important part of the process for such a Bill that those whose interests or rights are injuriously affected be given the chance to voice their objections to a Parliamentary Select Committee by petitioning against the Bill; and it is not part of the Government's intention to constrain that right."

It appears that that right is about to be constrained. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South, I do not wish to prejudge the decision of the House's Standing Orders Committee. I am sure that hon. Members who serve on that Committee will do their utmost to protect the interests not only of Back Benchers, but of the petitioners who have a right to be heard. I should like to place on record my request that, at the very least, those petitioners be given the standard recognised minimum eight weeks from Second Reading to petition before the Select Committee.

The White Paper said that

"the Government . . . will not seek to oppose the right of anyone to appear before the Committees . . . further steps, for example to ensure that potential petitioners receive timely information both on the procedures themselves and on the substance of the legislation, are also being considered."

That is a far cry from the advertisement that the Department of Transport placed in the national press. That advertisement said:

"Before the Channel Tunnel Bill becomes law there will be opportunities for those directly affected locally to have their voices heard."

The House has seen the efforts of the Department of Transport to constrain the process by which the House should normally consider the hybrid Bill procedure. For that reason, I am gravely concerned that the words "directly affected locally" may be construed to mean only those along a very narrow route indeed. Before the House rises for the spring recess, I would like my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to guarantee that all people of north-east Kent who will be directly affected and whose livelihoods are at stake will have an opportunity to have their voices heard.

9 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): After that helpful contribution by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), there are three brief matters that we should consider before the House adjourns for the spring recess. The first two are specifically constituency matters and the third relates to a wider area.

The first matter affects more than 1,000 properties in the Band ward in Basildon. Half of them are owner-occupied and the rest are rented from the local authority and the Commission for the New Towns. They were built by Sir Lindsey Parkinson after 1960. Unfortunately, the builders have gone into liquidation and my constituents find that many of the properties have been blighted by what is described as concrete cancer.

The outcome is that many of my constituents who have been trying to sell their properties have encountered a number of difficulties. They have found building societies and surveyors most reluctant to expedite matters so that the properties can be resold. I am anxious that my constituents should be able to seek some comfort from what the House might be able to do for them. My constituents are looking to the Commission for the New Towns and the local authority to purchase back those properties or for the House to amend the legislation so that full compensation can be given to the owners of properties which cannot be resold.

The next matter concerns more than 1,000 of my constituents in the Fellmores and Langdon Hills areas of Basildon. Those people have formed an action group to deal with heating matters. They are serviced by a coal-fired district heating system. Many of those people have difficult social problems. Many are without jobs, although they wish to work, and there are quite a number of single parent families. Therefore, the social difficulties are obvious. Two of those estates are in my constituency. I have seen many heating bills which, to put it mildly, are astronomical. A number of repossession orders have been served on properties there, too.

I have been grappling with this matter since I became the Member of Parliament for Basildon, and I have not had any success so far. The running cost for those properties should be £250. However, the average charge levied is 56 per cent. higher than individual gas-fired central heating would be. My constituents want the inquiry, which is currently being held about the properties, to be concluded and for individual gas-fired central heating to be installed.

The third matter that I wish to raise concerns protection for the unborn child. A year ago the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) introduced the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill. The Bill was given national publicity and coverage. The right hon. Gentleman brought the matter here, and Second Reading was given overwhelming support. Indeed, many hon. Members would have judged, by the volume of their constituency postbag, that there was widespread support for the protection of the unborn child. However, because of the way in which matters are conducted in the House, the Bill was talked out and it fell.

This year my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves), after a serious illness, bravely decided to reintroduce an amended version of the Bill. Rather unfavourably, he was drawn ninth in the ballot. Again, unfortunately, because of our procedures in this place, it now appears that that will not be debated this year.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): In the light of the history of the matter, does my hon. Friend agree that the time has come to press for a Select Committee to look into it in the depth that is required? That should be done particularly because of the claims in the press in the past few days that it will soon be possible, through the techniques of human embryo research, to enable men to have children. Against

that serious background and in view of the grave problems that we face, is it not incumbent on the House to take the serious and responsible view that a Select Committee is desirable to inform not only the public but Parliament, so that those matters can be brought out into the open once and for all?

Mr. Amess: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. I know how strongly he feels about that matter. However, as he will see presently, I have come to the conclusion that there has been enough talk on the subject, and I want some action now. I respect my hon. Friend's view.

My views are similar to those echoed by Cardinal Basil Hume, who says:

"No matter what claims on our sympathy and understanding are made on behalf of particular research into the causes of infertility and genetic defect, and into embryology, the needs of some cannot be allowed to eclipse the rights of others."

Cardinal Hume supported the Bill.

Research on human embryos cannot supply us with the answers that scientists are rightly seeking for the tragedies of infertility and other inherited disorders. The motives of scientists wishing to pursue embryo research may be entirely good. They may, in all good faith, believe that by examining live human embryos they will find the cures to the cruel diseases that afflict so may people. Professor Jerome Lejeune, who is expected to find a cure for Down's syndrome within the decade, asked himself whether he could advance his research work by using human embryos as guinea pigs, but concluded that such work could tell him absolutely nothing.

Embryo research is deemed necessary to improve the technique of in vitro fertilisation. However, I am filled with horror at the sort of experimentation canvassed by Dr. Edwards of Bourne hall. He stated that it might be necessary to put an embryo in the oviduct of a pig or rabbit for six to 12 weeks and then take it out again. Is a pig or a rabbit the right place for a human child to begin his or her life? I think not.

There is no doubt that the opponents of the Bill have sought, for better or worse, to distort what the Bill seeks to achieve. It has nothing to do with contraception. With regard to infertility, it would not affect adversely in any respect what is being done at the moment. Some opponents of the Bill should be honest and admit that several people who are engaged in helping childless couples are seeking to make and are achieving a substantial livelihood out of their work. I have been staggered by the size of the fees that are being charged to advise childless couples. The House should do something about this matter. I am anxious to learn from my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House when we can expect legislation on the Warnock report. I do not understand why such matters should be left to private Members' Bills. We dealt with surrogacy quite adequately last year. I cannot understand why we cannot do the same with these matters this year.

As I look round the Chamber, I can see that all hon. Members are alive and, I trust, awake. They are pleased to be here. When we were conceived there were no ifs or buts: it happened. There were no discussions about experimentation on us. Why should that happen now? Before the end of the Session I very much hope that we will fulfil the trust that the British people have in us and that we will give protection to the unborn child.

9.10 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I should like to raise the matter of a report which was published today by the science working party on alternative therapy by the British Medical Association. It has given rise to a significant amount of press comment and other comments on television and in the media generally, and I expect that comment will continue for some time.

Today's *London Standard* carries a headline

"It is not what the doctor ordered, BMA tells Charles fringe medicine 'does not work'."

The report continues:

"An exhaustive survey of alternative medicine suggested by Prince Charles while he was president of the BMA three years ago has failed to find any proof of the effectiveness of most treatments and warns that some can even be harmful."

It goes on:

"The conclusion of a team of leading doctors published today amounts to a scathing dismissal of remedies like acupuncture, osteopathy, homoeopathy and herbalism".

The report has been produced by the British Medical Association working party.

It is right that the House and the public should be aware that the BMA is a trade union. Moreover, it is a trade union which has a vested interest in ensuring the position of its members, including their remuneration. There should be an independent inquiry into this matter and into the important matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon, (Mr Amess) so that Parliament, legislators and the public can be properly informed about what is happening in this important area of public health.

I must stress that a Royal Commission was held in 1979 in New Zealand with regard to at least one of the disciplines mentioned in the report — chiropractic. I believe that there should be fair and independent inquiries into such matters. Many hon. Members or their friends and relations have received treatment from alternative or complementary practitioners. It is clear that the Royal Commission report to which I have referred was used by the medical establishment at the time, through visits to this country, to Canada and other parts of the world, to discredit chiropractic.

The Royal Commission did the opposite to what the medical establishment hoped and believed it would. It rapped the medical establishment firmly over the knuckles and said that there was considerable efficacy in chiropractic and that it should stand in its own right.

The BMA has published its report and has, until this speech, at any rate, caught the headlines on the subject. I do not wish to take a headline view. My concern is to draw attention to an important matter and to the fact that the report has to be viewed against the background of it being anything but independent. The report is negative and lacks the impartiality which one would expect of an organisation such as the BMA. The New Zealand chiropractic report, for example, is a substantial volume of careful and well organised evidence. The BMA report virtually dismisses chiropractic treatment in a few paragraphs, and the same goes for all the other alternative therapies, such as acupuncture, osteopathy and herbal remedies.

If we were to look back 150 years to the development and evolution of medicine in this country, we would recognise that doctors, distinguished as they are now, had themselves developed their training and practice in a evolving manner from the days when in 1803, for example, or therabouts, King George III was treated as a

[Mr. William Cash]

lunatic when he was suffering from porphyria. In that period people were treated by leeching and by bloodletting. That is not all that long ago, and accordingly we must take a more serious view of therapists such as those practising acupuncture, chiropractic treatment and osteopathy.

This year I was asked to open, and was honoured to do so, the British Holistic Medical Association's conference. It is an organisation which has been set up to develop bridges and constructive dialogue between practitioners in orthodox medicine and practitioners in complementary and alternative medicine. This should be developed and encouraged, unlike the report which has been produced by the BMA.

There is another organisation in which I played some part, together with Lord Home of the Hirsel, in introducing it to the public at a meeting which was held in Parliament last year. I refer to the Council for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. It is a responsible body that has been set up with a view to ensuring that there are higher standards and better qualifications for those who practise alternative medicine and proper standards of discipline. It has had extensive consultations with Dr. Noah of the communicable disease surveillance department and has come up with a code of ethics which has the seal of approval of the appropriate authorities.

The BMA has produced its report and it should now help those who have found that they are the butt end of a prejudicial report so that they may have a reasonable opportunity of securing an independent inquiry following a biased and rather short report.

It is interesting that 208 Members signed an early-day motion requesting that

"those who practise in the alternative field should have proper representation on an official medical committee which has been set up under statutory authority."

The 208 Members have shown their inclinations and their sympathy towards alternative medicine.

I found the BMA's report extremely negative, extremely destructive and very ill timed. I sincerely hope that there will be an opportunity for a countervailing balance so that the patients, who are the most important people, know that when they go to see an alternative practitioner they will not be dismissed as they have been hitherto by the BMA.

9.19 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Although limited in time and tucked away from the glare of publicity, these are important and valuable debates. Except for the rare occasions when a national event has not been resolved or properly debated and the Opposition are obliged to amend the Adjournment Motion, our two or three-hour debates are focused not on any one subject, but are given up to a wide range of matters of concern to Back-Bench Members on both sides of the House. It is an opportunity for us to raise matters of importance to our constituents, our areas and ourselves.

It is interesting how often these unco-ordinated speeches raise constituency and broad national anxieties. The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), who made the first of the 13 speeches that we have heard, spoke not just for the people of Kent and his constituency—he was later joined by the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale)—when he expressed his views about the need for the most thorough and rigorous inquiry into the Channel tunnel or fixed-link project, but for a great part of the nation.

I have never taken the view that the hybrid Bill procedure is satisfactory — indeed, it is old-fashioned and archaic — to decide important issues of public planning policy. It is impossible to imagine an issue of greater national importance and more worthy of serious study on grounds of the environment, economics, regional policy, the future of the Merchant Navy and broad national interests. No project rivals in importance the proposal to build a fixed link between Britain and France. I therefore remain strongly of the view that it would have been far better for the House and for the project if we had proceeded with a most rigorous and searching public inquiry. Failing that, it is imperative that no obstacle which would in any way limit the rights of petitioners should be raised. I refer not merely to those whose economic interests would be affected by land purchase and the rest, but to the large interests which should be able to present their petitions, argue their case and have the matter as thoroughly investigated as this admittedly inadequate procedure will allow.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) mentioned the prospective closure of the Severn tunnel junction, he was talking not simply about a facility in his area but about a marshalling yard facility which affects a large part of south Wales and the south-west of England. In the context of a particular closure proposal, he raised the prospects of British Rail's freight service.

We have inevitably heard speeches about the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) drew attention to the older Magnox stations and asked some important questions about them. My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) rightly reflected his constituents' anxieties at the timetabling of the proposal for commissioning the Torness AGR in his constituency. Tomorrow we shall have a major debate on nuclear policy, and that will be an occasion on which these and similar anxieties can be fully aired. I have no doubt whatever that, if we are to proceed with nuclear energy in this country, there will have be a continued policy of maximum openness so that people do not feel that important information is being withheld from them. Secondly, there must be objective, scrupulous and factual presentation of all the relevant factors so that people can have a rational basis on which to assess the risks and a framework in which to set their anxieties.

The hon. Members for York (Mr. Gregory) and for Thanet, North mentioned tourism — an important industry that affects us all. The Labour party does not take a casual view of tourism. Our concern is that we should never forget that tourism, like many other service industries, can make an important contribution to our economic prosperity and welfare, but it is no substitute for manufacturing industry, because that industry is important and essential to our national prosperity.

Mr. Gregory: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: I would rather not. Mine is the first of the concluding speeches, and I should like to mention other points before I finish.

I do not want to get engaged in the dialogue on the future of Cyprus. My own view about that troubled island is that there must be a time when, under suitable international auspices, the representatives of the two communities can agree about their future. It is not unusual in human affairs to be told that no such agreement is at present in sight, but to assume from that that one should give up trying and begin making important decisions on the basis that no progress is now possible is a defeatist course of action that I do not recommend.

There were two fascinating contributions by the hon. Members for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who, in different ways, dealt with important aspects of medicine. I strongly recommend to the hon. Member for Basildon that the House should wait for Government legislation based on the Warnock report. I hope that we shall not have to wait too long.

The hon. Member for Stafford commented on the recently published report on fringe medicine. He should not be too concerned, because such a report undertaken by the BMA suffers from precisely the drawbacks and defects that a study under such auspices inevitably experiences.

Timing has given this debate a special importance, because this is the first opportunity that hon. Members have had to express their concern since 20 million of our fellow citizens had the opportunity to vote last Thursday. I was glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) precisely addressed this matter. All hon. Members will agree that public opinion expressed in the polling booths is of paramount importance to us all. There can be no doubt that the combination of two by-elections, elections for every council seat in the 32 London boroughs, the first election ever for ILEA, and elections for one third of district and metropolitan councils throughout the land has been the most important expression of British public sentiment since the general election.

The net result of polling on 8 May has been a disaster for the Government, with the loss of nearly 700 seats on councils throughout the land, the loss of the rock-ribbed Conservative stronghold in Ryedale and the retention by a whisker—100 votes—of another stronghold in West Derbyshire. There have been some gains for the Liberal party, but the clear victor of the nationwide contest has been the Labour party. Psephologists are now arguing only whether, if last Thursday had been a general election, the Labour party would have had an overall majority or would be the strongest single party just short of the magic 326 seats. This is a sea-change in electoral support and in the life and fortunes of the Government.

In those circumstances I am a little torn on the question whether the House should adjourn for its Whitsun recess. The more the Government are exposed to the critical examination of the House, the more ragged, inept and confused their policies are seen to be. In the short period between Easter and Whitsun, we have seen the forced reversal of Government policy on British Leyland—the subject of the speech by the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle)—with the hapless Secretary of State for Trade and Industry obliged to make a total volte face and to retain in British public ownership both the Austin Rover car division and the truck and Land-Rover divisions of British Leyland. The clear intention had been to sell them to the Ford Motor Company and General Motors.

We have also seen the Shops Bill—a major item in the Government's legislative programme—killed stone dead on the Floor of the House when the Labour Opposition were joined by a small army of Tories in revolt. The Government have received a terrible rebuff in public opinion, both in their handling of the United States' strike against Libya from British airfields and in their dilatory and unco-ordinated response to the Chernobyl disaster.

As this Session of Parliament has unfolded, the country has rightly sensed a process of disintegration in the Government, an uncertainty of response to major external events, divisions on major policy questions, and a barely concealed revolt among ministerial colleagues against arbitrary decision-making by the Prime Minister. Massively damaged by the resignations of the former Secretaries of State for Defence and for Trade and Industry, and, above all, by the Prime Minister's involvement in the events that led to their departure, the Prime Minister's standing and credibility have now reached an all-time low.

Because I wish to see the rapid demise of the Government, I can see the case for giving them no respite and no Adjournment. However, against that, I must set other considerations, of which the House will be glad to know. Individual and collective ministerial mistakes affect the whole country, not just Ministers. Critical issues are arising and they need more time for serious reflection than they have so far been given if Ministers are not to make even more grievous errors in the immediate future.

With the Budget and Finance Bill largely out of the way, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Government must reconsider their economic policy. The figure of 3·5 million unemployed shows no sign of decreasing. Since oil prices have collapsed, the balance of payments has predictably moved into major deficit. The capacity of manufacturing industry to close the gap has been squandered and lost. The Chancellor's stated first priority of further income tax cuts must be changed now that the nation has so clearly and rightly voted for an increase in public expenditure on health, education, transport and social services, as I am sure the Lord Privy Seal will agree.

There are major problems in energy policy, including the decision on the pressurised water reactor nuclear power station which now needs the most urgent consideration. There is the question of the Top Salaries Review Body's report which exploded in the Government's face a year ago and which is likely to be more explosive this time.

We all know that the Lord Privy Seal has been stretching his mind on these and similar problems over the weekend. As those who heard him on "Weekend World" on Sunday and later on "The World at One" will acknowledge, he is disturbed by the raucous style and lurid language of the Government, in particular by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and chairman of the Conservative party. We know that while in place of the Government's arrogant style he is in favour of calculated humility, his real concern is not the presentation but the content of policy. In the great battle between the advocates of private affluence and public squalor, those who believe in minimum collective provision and those who believe in an expanding and just economy, the Lord Privy Seal realises that his Government have gone much too far in the wrong direction.

I hope that in replying to this brief debate the Lord Privy Seal will not only comment on the particular points put to him by hon. Members on both sides of the House, but will

[Mr. Shore]

ease and interest our forthcoming Adjournment by developing further his reflections on the need for change to establish good government in Britain.

9.36 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I rather enjoyed the speech of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). One normally has well-regulated debates on the recess motion that deal with the whole range of domestic and constituency problems. The right hon. Gentleman sought to elevate it all, possibly because we may run out of speakers ahead of the allotted three hours, into a tour d'horizon of a most powerful and partisan political complexion, with a flattering amount of reference to myself. Having thoroughly enjoyed his speech, I must point out, as he will understand, that Ministers are chained to the Dispatch Box and conventions, and are required and expected to answer the debate, so I shall proceed to that rather more pedestrian task. However, I thank him for his kind references to me in the conclusion of his speech.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) made an extremely effective marshalling of the case that he has deployed in the House on a number of times on what I am so glad that he still calls the Channel tunnel. I was brought up on this controversy, thinking of it as a tunnel rather than a link. I realise that, as in so many aspects of my life, I am still attached to the past and am not as contemporary as I should be, but I still find that a happier explanation of this substantial project, which will undoubtedly exercise the House in the months ahead. My hon. Friend was joined in the task of outlining his anxieties by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale). I shall report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport the points that have been made about public consultation and the need to have as much openness as is feasible in this matter.

The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) made a characteristically eloquent appeal on behalf of the freight services that operate in south Wales and expressed his concern that any reorganisation should not savage the standard of services which that part of the Principality has come to expect. I shall report his views.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) returned to the subject for which he has made great and honourable sacrifice, the Anglo-Irish agreement. He elaborated on four sectors in which he thought that progress could be made which, while acknowledging the continuance of the agreement, would mitigate it and make it more acceptable to the majority community in the Province. It would be wholly inappropriate that I should comment on the thought that that proposition is valid, but it deserves the fullest consideration in the House and the Northern Ireland Office. I shall be as competent a postboy as I can be in these matters.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) was joined by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) in raising the subject of British nuclear policy. Specific aspects of it were mentioned such as the safety of the Magnox reactors and Torness, which is in the process of being commissioned in East Lothian. Both hon. Members deserve to be warmly congratulated on their ingenuity in using this evening to make speeches that will look just as good in the *Haddington Courier* whether they are made today or tomorrow. The hon. Member for East Lothian was listened to in attentive silence. If he had spoken tomorrow he would have had to wrestle with the massed ranks — [AN HON. MEMBER: "Of Privy Councillors".] I have not spent all my life trying to become a Privy Councillor without having some residual affection for the role that they perform, but I understand only too well the frustrations felt by the hon. Gentleman.

However, whether those speeches are made today or tomorrow, they have the same validity and are made with the same integrity. I shall make it my responsibility to ensure that their contents are made known to the Ministers taking part in tomorrow's debate. I thank the hon. Members for Yeovil and for East Lothian for relieving the pressure just a little on those wishing to speak tomorrow.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) spoke about tourism. It was claimed that there should be some structural reorganisation in the way that the public sector addresses that industry. I understand the arguments, but I am sure that my hon. Friend will concede that the issue is made more difficult by virtue of the many Departments and public bodies involved. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend's contribution to the debate is particularly valid, and will be noted. I believe that he speaks with wide parliamentary support when he talks about the frustration in learning that there will be a great fall in the amount of potential American tourist traffic because of events in the middle east and Libya. I shall make it my personal responsibility to write to the American ambassador pointing out my hon. Friend's comments. He will not need any reminding, but it might be helpful to reinforce that point.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) allowed politics to intrude in our proceedings. Not for him the paving stones, drains and other things with which we have a cheerful familiarity. His view was that recent local election results might have some longer-term political consequences. I agree that for the Government they represent a defeat, but with every defeat goes a challenge. The nature and the measure of the challenge will draw a response from the Tory party so that I can look forward to the next election with, I suspect, much more inner confidence than the hon. Gentleman can.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney cheerfully talked about the substantial and compelling gains made by the Labour party, which, indeed, they were, but he did not reveal that in his neck of the London woods the Labour party did not exactly ride high everywhere. There is a volatility about the situation which should encourage some, dare I say, humility among those of us who make forecasts. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not think that I am trying to answer a point made from behind him that I was unwilling to answer when it came from him, but this subject arose because of the television programme "Weekend World". For years now I have looked across at the right hon. Gentleman with growing affection and increasing incomprehension, in a sense, that anyone could hold such heresies. There must be a better life for him on a Sunday morning than communing with politics. Has he not got a dog to exercise or a church congregation to swell? Apparently not. He was glued to "Weekend World" to see what cheerful and reflective observations I would make.

My remarks are on the record. I should not have thought we should postpone the recess on account of my contribution to that television programme. I should like to

think that it would feature in the parliamentary debate before the recess, after the recess, up to the long recess, through the new Session of Parliament, and after the striking Tory victory. People will trace all that as part of the great unfolding of events. I have no shyness about that. It is a better use of our time to have the recess as planned rather than to defer it.

I turn to a lesser local difficulty—the Cyprus dispute. I am always encouraged by the fact that if, in some extraordinary way, we can take from our proceedings all the agonies of the Province, Cyprus will emerge to take its place. If ever the House wanted to see sharply contrasting, firm and genuine committed views, it has done so this evening.

I can offer nothing better to my hon. Friends the Members for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) and Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and the House than to say that, of course, I shall refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. We all agree that the issue will tax all the ingenuities of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It is of great importance not only to the communities who live on that unhappy island but to the West generally, because of the strategic position that Cyprus occupies.

The right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) talked about the great deal of time that has been made available by the defeat of the Shops Bill. As that comment came from such an authority, I felt that I must respond. A former and distinguished Chief Whip might be presumed to know exactly what sort of Niagara of time had been released by the mishap over the Second Reading of the Bill. Whatever time was available for the Shops Bill has been used up already. Those hon. Members who think that they can beat me about with demands for this or that to help fill those virginal acres resulting from the defeat of the Shops Bill are very much mistaken.

In what I thought was a touching contribution, the right hon. Gentleman said that his constituency had reacted sharply when proffered a gipsy site. Often we talk about two nations. Often we talk about the rural community and the urban community. If there is one thing that unites Bristol and north Shropshire, it is ambivalence, to say the least, when given the option of a gipsy site.

Mr. John Carlisle *rose*——

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the position is the same in Luton.

Mr. John Carlisle: I remind my right hon. Friend of the words of the Prime Minister when she moved to No. 10 in 1979. She declared that she sought better legislation but less of it. Would not my right hon. Friend do better if he took those words to heart?

Mr. Biffen: I endorse the sentiments of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) asked what developments had taken place in the truck industry in the United Kingdom. He made some pertinent points and I am sure he understands that I cannot agree with all of them. None the less, my hon. Friend referred to a part of the debate which was not as widely heard when the decisions were made. I will relay his comments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) touched on a couple of points of constituency interest, and I shall certainly take note of them. He then elevated our debate by his references to the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill which was introduced some time ago by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). As my hon. Friend said, the Bill did not survive the vagaries of the legislative route that had been chosen. I think that the House will wish to return to that matter.

I can understand the point made by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, who thought that it might be helpful if a little more time passed before the House considered the matter anew. I can in no sense anticipate what might be in the Queen's Speech, but this is one of those profound issues that touch on moral judgments. My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon quoted with great effect the words of Cardinal Hume. The House is often at its best in such debates, but I must say that they are among the most difficult to manage procedurally. None the less, clearly we shall return to this matter in due course.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) made an early comment on the debate that will attend the document that is being produced on alternative therapy. I thoroughly enjoyed his contribution. I am not sure where I shall stand at the end of that debate but, again, it is a matter that properly enjoins the attention of the House. I am sure that he will agree that this is one of those many debates that can proceed just as well after the recess as before it.

Mr. Winnick: In case the right hon. Gentleman is worried about my Sunday mornings, may I say that I never watch television. I read his remarks in the press. I assume that they were correct because he did not challenge them. During the interview the right hon. Gentleman said that, if his party were to be re-elected, the Prime Minister would not stay the whole course. Was that remark cleared by No. 10, because the other day the right hon. Lady said that she was only halfway through her premiership?

Mr. Biffen: Like all good political speeches, it left more questions unanswered than answered.

We shall have our short break and then return and debate all these great issues—those that cover foreign affairs and those that cover the economy. Of course, the Conservative party will be under the goad of recent by-election and local electon losses, but that is not the precondition for defeatism. It is a precondition for arguing back and winning the argument, the affection of the country and, ultimately, the vote. That is exactly what we intend to do

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising on Friday 23rd May, do adjourn until Tuesday 3rd June; and that the House shall not adjourn on Friday 23rd May until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

DENTISTS

That the draft Dental Auxillaries Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 11th April, be approved.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Social Security

9.53 pm

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): I seek leave of the House to introduce a petition on proposals published by the Government in December 1985 in the White Paper on the consequences of the social security reviews undertaken by the Secretary of State for Social Services.

The petition has 28 signatures, but they are the signatures of the management committee of the Walthamstow Labour party, which has some 600 members and which, as a result of last Thursday's show, probably represents about half the electorate in my area. The petition is addressed to the proposals in the White Paper. The petitioners express the hope that the legislation based on that White Paper will not be passed because it

"would be extremely detrimental to the residents of the United Kingdom who are in receipt of Social Security benefits"

of whom there are many millions.

The petition concludes:

"Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House do not pass legislation arising out the 'Reform of Social Security' White Paper. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc."

To lie upon the Table.

Navan Fort

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

9.54 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I welcome the opportunity to refer once again to what I regard as a very important matter, to which I referred in my maiden speech. I shall try to put it into context by referring to something that is entirely English and not Irish at all. There are two stories, one of which goes back into medieval English romance and the other into pre-Christian romance, in Irish literary terms, that appeal to me. They may also appeal, in an impish way, to the Minister to whom I address these remarks.

The first is the story of Gawain in English romantic literature. The story of Gawain and the Green Knight may appeal to me because the knight happened to be green. This knight threatened the knights of the Round Table that if they did not do certain things he would use the gigantic sword that he wielded.

It is also significant that in Irish folklore and Irish romantic literature there is the precedent, about 800 years before that, of Bricriu who wielded a sword and threatened the knights of the Red Branch. There may be some significance in the fact that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) lives at Lough Bricrhland, which is called after Briciu. The most literal translation is "poison-tongue". I cast no aspersions whatsoever. However, if one combines the Green Knight and Bricriu one sees the relationship between Camelot in British legend and the Emain Macha in Irish legend. There is a substantial difference. Nobody has yet established where Camelot is. Nobody has been able to point to a site and say, "There is Camelot". However, we know that Emain Macha and Navan Fort was the seat of Irish kings. Ptolemy's atlas as far back as the second century after Christ charts it as the seat of kings. For that reason it is a matter of great concern to the people of Northern Ireland.

There has been a long public inquiry into the application for permission to quarry adjacent to and on the site of Emain Macha. I shall not deal with its merits or demerits. It was the subject of the longest public inquiry in the history of Northern Ireland. The Minister will have to make a very difficult decision and I sympathise with him. I ask him to bear in mind the evidence that was produced at the public inquiry and to realise that a decision is urgent.

I raised the matter again in a parliamentary question on 28 April. In his reply the Minister said that, having considered the report, he would report to us as quickly as possible. I hope that the Minister does not think that I am being churlish when I say to him that I find his definition of speed rather difficult to understand. This matter is of interest not only to the people of Northern Ireland but to those living elsewhere. Its interest lies beyond the confines of Northern Ireland and, indeed, the whole island of Ireland. We wonder why this matter is being treated in so dilatory a fashion, why a decision cannot be made and why, after so many weeks, the Minister has not got round to providing a definite answer to this very serious problem.

Reluctantly, I have to say that those of us who sat through the public inquiry, who gave evidence to it and who feel strongly and deeply about this issue, are becoming impatient at the way in which the Minister's

Department is failing to come to grips with the problem. I ask him point blank tonight, now that I have the opportunity, when he will make his decision. Will it be long-fingered for another month, two months or for a matter of weeks? He must realise that, apart from the issue at stake — the planning controversy — other factors pertain——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

There are other issues which pertain, not least the potential development of this historic site in cultural and educational terms and, not least, in archaeological terms. That type of forward planning cannot proceed or be developed beyond the embryo stage until the long-term position is clearly understood, not just in relation to Navan Fort but to the whole complex of Emain Macha. I must stress that that is not just confined to the fort itself but to the whole historic complex known as Emain Macha. In practical terms that is the Irish equivalent to Camelot, except that it exists.

I think that Cicero once said that not to be aware of the past is to remain for ever a child. I am pleased that there has been such an interest in international and national terms in the future of this complex. I am pleased that people are aware of such a positive influence in their heritage and in their folk memory and in the whole literary landscape to which it has contributed in relation to the works of James Millington Synge and William Butler Yeats, just as Camelot was the basis of so much of Lord Tennyson's great poetry.

I know that the Minister has a difficult decision to make. I trust that he will make the right one. I hope for the sake of all of us and for future generations living in Ireland that he will. I ask him to make his decision quickly and, please, put us all out of our misery, because there is a lot of forward thinking to do. A lot of planning must go into what is or is not to develop on the site and it cannot be done until he gives us a clear idea of what his decision will be. I take this opportunity of asking him to tell us clearly tonight when the decision will be made.

10.3 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): As the nineteenth Viscount Newry, the sixth Earl of Kilmorey and the hereditary abbot of Newry and Mourne, I am an upstart and a newcomer compared with the knights of Ulster and Cuchullain. I am fully aware of and understand the obligations that are placed upon me.

I regret that I shall never have the opportunity of becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer, so I shall not understand what that purdah may be, but, in terms of my role as Minister with responsibility for the environment in Northern Ireland, I understand my role in purdah in relation to Navan Fort.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) on showing brevity and circumspection in his contribution this evening, because, as he pointed out, the matter has been debated at a public inquiry which lasted for 22 days—one of the longest that has taken place in Northern Ireland. I believe that the points on both sides were fully debated.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the report of the planning appeals commission is with the Department. I understand the hon. Gentleman's major concern about the timing of our decision, but he will appreciate that when an application has been the subject of an inquiry, important procedural rules require that the Department should not take into account any representations made afterwards without giving all those involved in the inquiry an opportunity to see and comment on the representations.

The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that it is important for us to come to our own decision on this immensely important issue. I am satisfied that all the relevant points that came up in the important public inquiry have been thoroughly debated and that the planning appeals commission dealt with them fully in its report to the Department.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety, but I ask him to wait just a little while longer. I trust that the Department's decision will be made by the end of May.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 13 May 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GULL ISLAND PROTECTION BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

IPSWICH PORT AUTHORITY BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

United States Bases

1. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now publish a statement on the arrangements for the use of conventional weapons from United States bases in the United Kingdom.

12. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will now publish a statement on the arrangements for the use of conventional weapons by the United States from United Kingdom bases.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stated on 7 May:

"Under the Churchill-Truman arrangements, there are no circumstances in which American aircraft based in this country may be used without our consent in military operations planned by the United States."—[*Official Report*, 7 May 1986; Vol. 97, c. *132*.]

Mr. Dubs: Is the Secretary of State aware that, despite his answer, the confidence of British people in consultations between ourselves and Washington has been severely shattered by the way in which our bases were used for the attack on Libya? Does he agree that the very least for which we can ask is more consultation in future, and, better still, no use of NATO bases for non-NATO purposes?

Mr. Younger: That is a somewhat surprising question, because, while there is plenty of room for controversy about all aspects of this matter, the one thing that is perfectly clear is that the consultation procedure is satisfactory and has worked extremely well.

Mrs. Clwyd: In view of the Secretary of State's answer and the Government's total subservience to the United States Government, will he tell us to what extent the arrangements involve the use of Britain as a strategic base for the Americans in the event of another attack in which the Americans are the principal belligerents?

Mr. Younger: The answer has been made clear many times. If there were to be any further request from the United States for any further such action, it would be an entirely new request and would have to be considered afresh by my right hon. Friend and myself.

Sir Antony Buck: Will my right hon. Friend ignore the remarks of Opposition Members and confirm that the arrangements were found perfectly satisfactory by preceding Governments — not only Conservative, but Labour?

Mr. Younger: My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely correct. Indeed, the original agreement was negotiated with the Americans by a Labour Government under Mr. Attlee.

Mr. Baldry: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the use of bases, such as Upper Heyford, will always be a decision for both Governments and that nothing has changed? Will he further confirm that that has been the position in the past and will be the position in future? Is that not the safeguard that has protected us for many years past and will do so for many years to come?

Mr. Younger: I can give my hon. Friend that absolute assurance. The arrangements have been perfectly satisfactory, and we have no intention of changing them.

Mr. Foulkes: Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the same arrangements apply for missiles fired from United States submarines sailing out of United Kingdom bases?

Mr. Younger: Yes, the same arrangements apply to all bases.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is more than a certain offensiveness about the suggestion that American forces — which, as a nation, by heart and resolve, are valiant allies — are somehow or other the enemies of our freedom? Without the Americans, what freedom would we have in the Western world?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct in what he says. It is quite clear that the defence of this country depends entirly upon defending it in conjunction with our allies, and our principal ally in the NATO Alliance is the United States. It is our closest ally by a long way.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the arrangements for the use of conventional weapons are no different from those for the use of chemical weapons? As the Government seem to be determined next week, or the week after, to allow binary chemical bombs to be established at Upper Heyford and Lakenheath, will he confirm that the rules regarding the use of those bombs will be no different from those regarding the bombs used to attack Libya?

Mr. Younger: I do not think that that arises, because there are no chemical weapons stored in the United Kingdom and we have no intention of agreeing to chemical weapons being stored here by the United States. Obviously, if it were to ask us to do so, the matter would have to be considered.

Strategic Defence Initiative

3. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is satisfied with the progress of strategic defence initiative research.

Mr. Younger: Progress of SDI research as a whole is a matter for the United States Government.

Mr. Wardell: In view of the leaking of the memorandum of understanding on SDI between the West German Government and the United States Government, will the Secretary of State now publish the agreement between the British and American Governments before it is also leaked?

Mr. Younger: The details of the memorandum of understanding between the British and United States Governments contain confidential matters which it would not be appropriate to publish. However, I have by arrangement, on a classified basis, supplied the details of the memorandum to the Defence Select Committee, which I hope it will find helpful.

Mr. Michael Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a little concern about his initial answer? As I understand it, my right hon. Friend's predecessor and Mr. Weinberger took a particular and detailed interest in the agreement to ensure effective implementation. In the light of agreements between the Federal Republic of Germany and Israel, does my right hon. Friend feel that it is a matter of urgency that some progress can be demonstrated to those who follow these matters?

Mr. Younger: It is certainly desirable that progress can be demonstrated in our participation in the SDI research programme. All memorandums of understanding are not necessarily the same. For classified reasons, it would not be appropriate to publish ours.

Mr. McNamara: Will the Secretary of State say whether the classification is based on commercial or defence reasons, or both? If it is only for defence reasons, when will we know the commercial background to these matters, and who will control the outcome of the research —us or the Pentagon?

Mr. Younger: There are both commercial and defence reasons for the confidentiality, so it would not be proper to publish the memorandum of understanding. However, I hope that the House will find it an acceptable compromise for the Defence Select Committee to see the memorandum on a classified basis.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Soviet Union has been exploring this area for many years, that if we had not taken part in the initiative nothing would have stopped the United States from creaming off some of our brightest and best academics to participate, and that, through our participation, we may be able to influence the important decision whether this important initiative is implemented in due course?

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend. If we had decided not to take any part in this purely research programme it would have continued regardless, without any participation by British companies. Indeed, there would have been considerable danger that skilled British technicians would have had to emigrate to America to participate, and that would not have been in our interests in any respect.

Nuclear Testing

4. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what need there is for nuclear testing by or on behalf of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Younger: The United Kingdom requires to carry out nuclear tests in order to maintain the effectiveness of its nuclear defence capabilities.

Mr. Lloyd: Given the evidence from the Chernobyl disaster and the effects of radiation, even at low radiation yields equivalent to a 1 kilotonne bomb, can the Secretary of State tell us whether Britain's interests would be better served by guaranteeing that our missiles are sent on a day when the wind is in the right direction, or by moving towards a verifiable test ban treaty, which we now know is possible?

Mr. Younger: The Government's policy is to work in every way possible for a comprehensive test ban treaty. The principal obstacle to a treaty being concluded now is the absence of any effective verification procedures. I do not think that there is any connection with the Chernobyl disaster other than that.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that nuclear warheads come in a wide range of sizes, with the ability to cause equally wide-ranging devastation, and that they can also be fitted to a variety of different delivery systems? Does he further agree that, to bring together the right warheads with the right delivery systems to meet the changing needs of our defence requirements, it is essential that continuing testing goes on while the opposite side are doing the same?

Mr. Younger: We all wish that a way can be found, as soon as possible, of eliminating nuclear weapons altogether, but, while they are there, testing is essential for safety and operational reasons. The Government's policy is to do everything possible to negotiate a comprehensive test ban treaty as soon as verification can be made credible.

Mr. Strang: Is not the Government's assertion that verification procedures and techniques are not yet available rejected by leading scientists, not only in the Soviet Union and the United States, but here? Does not his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) make it clear that, far from wanting a comprehensive test ban treaty, the Government simply pay lip-service to that objective, while their real objective is to continue nuclear testing to develop new nuclear weapons?

Mr. Younger: I do not accept any of that. One can find scientists in this country who will say that verification can be achieved, and others who say the opposite. The advice that is given to me is that verification is very far from being 100 per cent. effective, or even acceptable in its present state. We must do all that we can to encourage the Soviet Union to agree further measures on verification, so that we can make progress.

Mr. Alexander: Is it not the case that while Polaris and Trident are American delivery vessels, the warheads are British and, if they are to work, they must be tested?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is right. While these weapons exist and we have them, for all these reasons we must test them from time to time. However, none of that is against our ultimate aim of having a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Wallace: Is not the Secretary of State's last answer the key to it—that verification is put up only as a thin excuse, which is not even accepted in many parts of the United States Government, for not progressing towards a comprehensive test ban treaty? Is not the development of the Trident warhead stopping Britain from taking advantage of its unique position to take initiatives in seeking a comprehensive test ban treaty?

Mr. Younger: If the hon. Gentleman thinks a little further about this matter, he will appreciate that a comprehensive test ban treaty, or any test ban treaty, which it was not possible to be absolutely certain that we could verify, would be worth nothing and would be an extremely dangerous measure for us to embark upon.

Mr. Shersby: Further to the question by the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), can my right hon. Friend say whether it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to carry out atmospheric tests with nuclear weapons?

Mr. Younger: There is no change in our normal policy on nuclear tests, and we do not make advance announcements of when and where they will take place.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The right hon. Gentleman's first answer was the correct one. He made it clear that the Government will not agree to a comprehensive ban treaty because that would deny the effectiveness that the Government require. Why does he not come clean and make it clear that it is nothing to do with verification or safety, but that, to get Trident, the Government must test the warheads?

Mr. Younger: The right hon. Gentleman is wrong. It is clear that a test ban treaty, or a test ban, without credible means of verification is not worth anything, and it would be an extremely dangerous course on which to embark. I hope that, whatever other disagreements we may have on this difficult subject, we can at least agree that if we are to have a test ban, we must have adequate verification first.

Youth Training Scheme

5. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are being taken to increase the take-up places under the YTS scheme by persons for whom his Department is responsible; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces outlined steps being taken to encourage armed services YTS recruitment in his answer to questions put by my hon. Friends the Members for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) and for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 15 April, at columns 712-13.

Mr. Colvin: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the fact that 2,700 youngsters have done armed services YTS, and 60 per cent. are staying on for regular service in the armed forces. Nevertheless, only about a quarter of the ASYTS places are being taken up. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend will tell us what he proposes to do to promote YTS in the armed forces to a greater extent, perhaps through a cadet corps, particularly now that, with the introduction of the two-year YTS, greater training facilities will be available in particular qualifications for City and Guilds?

Mr. Lee: I know of my hon. Friend's interest in this matter. We shall consider his specific suggestions. We continue to promote the scheme actively through visits by service school liaison officers, several thousand such visits are planned this year, and there will be a new range of publicity material. There are some pleasing aspects. Of the participants in armed forces YTS about 60 per cent. have gone on to regular engagements. On the civilian YTS, approximately 70 per cent. have gone on to full apprenticeships with us.

Mr. Douglas: We welcome the fact that there are new entrants in the services in the lower echelons, but what is happening to the attrition rate in the higher echelons? We seem to be losing highly skilled personnel, especially from the Royal Navy. Is that loss related to the lack of ordering of new classes of vessels, especially the types 22 and 23? When will orders be placed to suit the services so that we can keep our highly skilled personnel?

Mr. Lee: The hon. Gentleman is an extremely skilled parliamentarian. His specific question on frigates comes somewhat lower on the Order Paper. This early question does not really relate to the question on YTS.

Mr. Conway: Are those who do not convert from these schemes to regular service given information that may lead them to enlist in the Territorial Army?

Mr. Lee: I am not aware whether they are given specific information about possible engagement in the Territorial Army. I shall certainly look into that specific suggestion.

Mr. Allen McKay: Would not popularisation of YTS ensure that those who participated in it could, if they wished, join the armed forces afterwards?

Mr. Lee: I shall certainly take up that point.

Space-launched Weapons (Soviet Union)

6. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the most up-to-date information available to him about progress by the Soviet Union's research and development programme for space-launched weapons systems.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): I refer my hon. Friend to the paper that I have placed in the Library entitled "The Soviet Ballistic Missile Defence Programme". I refer my hon. Friend also to the United States Government's assessment in "Soviet Military Power 1986," a copy of which is also in the Library.

The Soviet Union has a long-standing and broadly based research and development programme relevant to space-based weapons systems and is the only country to have already deployed an anti-satellite weapons system.

Mr. Chapman: In the light of that reply, does my right hon. Friend not regard it as the height of hypocrisy for the Soviet Union's leadership to condemn the United States strategic defence initiative research programme as destabilising? If we are to have verifiable, balanced, multilateral disarmament, which we all want, is it not incumbent on the Soviet Union to come clean and be open and honest about its own star wars programme?

Mr. Stanley: I certainly agree that there is no basis on which the Soviet Union can criticise the United States for

an extensive research programme on ballistic missile defence, because the Soviet Union has been engaged on such a programme since the 1960s. The Soviet Union possesses and is upgrading around Moscow the world's only system of active anti-ballistic missile defences, which employs nuclear-tipped missiles capable of destroying targets beyond the atmosphere. It has an operational anti-satellite system, and it is conducting substantial programmes on advanced technologies relevant to ballistic missile defence, including high-powered lasers, kinetic energy and particle beam weapons and heavy-lift space launchers. In fact, since 1976 the Soviet Union has conducted more than twice as many launches as the rest of the world put together, 80 per cent. of them military in nature.

Mr. Wilkinson: Taking account of the Soviet Union's space and science budget, most of which is devoted to military purposes, such as research and development into strategic defence systems, is not the overall military capability of the Soviet Union much greater than one would estimate, judging by those defence expenditure figures which are made public?

Mr. Stanley: The Soviet Union certainly has an enormous research and development programme. Over a long period it has carried out a major research programme into the possibility of a strategic defence system.

Mr. James Lamond: If we know as much as that about the Soviet Union's space research programme, is it not surprising that we claim we cannot verify whether the Soviet Union is testing nuclear bombs?

Mr. Stanley: I think the hon. Gentleman is aware that scientifically that is a quite different proposition.

Aish and Company, Poole

8. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the question of Mr. Jim Smith and Aish and Company of Poole in the past month.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Norman Lamont): The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) recently raised this matter with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, and I have written to the hon. Member.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister aware that I have spent the past 12 months investigating the affair of Mr. Jim Smith and Aish and Company? The conclusion that I draw is that officials at the Ministry of Defence have deliberately misled Ministers as to the effectiveness of post costing arrangements within the Ministry of Defence? They know that it was Mr. Smith who found the excess profits being charged by Aish and Company. When the report of the Public Accounts Committee is produced in two weeks, will the Minister take it home and read it in detail, follow its recommendations, and make a statement to the House?

Mr. Lamont: I have not spent the past year researching this subject, as has the hon. Gentleman, but it sometimes feels as though I have spent the last year preparing for the hon. Gentleman's questions on this matter. I take seriously what he says. However, I fail to follow what motive he thinks Ministry of Defence officials would have in denying things which he believes to be true. I cannot understand that motive. Of course I shall look at the Public Accounts Committee's report, and I shall be interested to see whether there is any evidence to cause us to change our conclusions.

Cruise Missiles

9. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the allocated number of cruise missiles to be placed in the United Kingdom has now been completed.

Mr. Stanley: Information on the deployment of cruise missiles in the United Kingdom is provided in the "Annual Statement on the Defence Estimates." I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 320 of the 1986 Estimates, which were published yesterday, which indicates that the deployment of 96 cruise missiles at RAF Greenham common has been completed. Deployment of the remaining 64 missiles at RAF Molesworth is not due to be completed until 1988.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Minister realise the depth of worry in this country about cruise missiles? Is he aware that the vast majority of the British people are against them, especially in the atmosphere of worry about nuclear issues generally? Is it not a fact that a wave of horror went through this country when the Prime Minister took a personal decision about the bombing of Libya, without consulting even the Foreign Minister or the Cabinet, and that a deep worry about cruise missiles now pervades this country?

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the recent events in Libya had nothing to do with INF missiles. I think that more people in this country are worried about the scale of the continued programme of deployment of long-range INF missiles by the Soviet Union. I remind the hon. Gentleman that when NATO initially took its twin-track decision on the deployment of INF missiles, the Soviet Union had 693 long-range INF warheads facing west — Europe — and it has already increased that number to 922, which are now deployed. I believe that the scale of that programme is the biggest single concern among the British people.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Cambridgeshire, far from being worried about Government policy on the location of cruise missiles there, at last Thursday's local elections the Conservatives won four seats from the Liberals and two from Labour?

Mr. Stanley: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the results that he achieved in his constituency, which all Conservative Members will be seeking to emulate next May.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that one of the more pleasing features about recent events in relation to cruise missiles has been that members of cruise watch have been able to harry the movements of those cruise missiles to a greater extent than ever before? Of course, we would like them to be even more successful. Will the hon. Gentleman condemn the tactics used by those who are driving the missile carriers in thier attempts to frustrate the peaceful efforts of those who are standing up for the majority in Britain, especially after the Libyan bombing?

Mr. Stanley: I note the hon. Gentleman's support for the protesters on the public highway, but I am afraid that

I have to disappoint him. The programme of exercises for ground-launched cruise missiles is continuing very well and is not being disrupted by the protesters.

Mr. Stokes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Soviet Government and Warsaw Pact powers made an immense propaganda effort to prevent those missiles being based in the West? The programme has gone forward, and all of us in the West feel much happier for that reason.

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that it is not a coincidence that the fact that the NATO countries have gone ahead with their deployment option on INF missiles has, for the first time, brought the Soviet Union back to the INF negotiating table. I hope that it will provide a means of bringing about a fair and equitable arms control agreement in relation to those nuclear missiles.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Minister confirm that at the time of the United States raid on Libya, cruise missiles were placed on amber alert? Were the Government consulted before that took place?

Mr. Stanley: There was no change at all in nuclear alert states at that time.

Mr. Hirst: Does my right hon. Friend recall that the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the anti-nuclear lobby asserted that the deployment of cruise in the United Kingdom and Europe would wreck any chance of arms reduction talks? Does he agree that the opposite has happened? Will he take this opportunity to restate the Government's continuing commitment to a mutual, balanced, and verifiable reduction of nuclear weapons?

Mr. Stanley: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that I shall most certainly restate that commitment to an equitable, verifiable arms control agreement in INF and elsewhere. The pattern of the INF negotiations has once again brought out the old adage that the Soviet Union is prepared to negotiate on arms control provided that we are negotiating from a position of some strength.

Laser-guided Weapons

10. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has undertaken any research into the accuracy of laser-guided weapons.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Marek: If the Government have undertaken research into the accuracy of weapons that will be deployed if the SDI ever comes to fruition, can the Minister give any guarantees that the United States will not simply use this country for the technology that is available here and then use that technology without paying the proper price for it? What guarantees can the Minister give the House that that will not happen?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman seems to be jumping from laser-guided weapons to the SDI agreement. We have made it clear to the House on many occasions that the memorandum of understanding that we have signed with the United States Government protects our own intellectual property rights and safeguards our freedom to exploit the fruits of British research in British companies. We are wholly satisfied on the point that the hon. Gentleman raises.

United States Air Force (Bases)

11. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Defence which Royal Air Force stations are currently used as bases by the United States air force.

Mr. Stanley: The USAF's main operating bases in the United Kingdom are at the following seven RAF stations: Alconbury, Bentwaters, Fairford, Lakenheath, Mildenhall, Upper Heyford and Woodbridge. The USAF makes use of other RAF bases and facilities elsewhere.

Mr. Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those United States bases make a substantial contribution to the defence of this country, and that the removal of those bases, as advocated by the Labour party, and the replacement of that cover by the Royal Air Force, would place an intolerable burden on the defence budget?

Mr. Stanley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the United States presence in this country, including the USAF presence, is an integral part of Western Europe's deterrent, which is faced by the Soviet Union. I also agree that the Labour party's commitment to make the Americans remove their bases from this country is one of the most damaging attacks on NATO, and one of the most damaging defence policies that has ever been adopted by any British political party.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Does the Minister not accept that there is increasing concern among the public living around all the RAF bases used by the USAF, and also in areas over which F111s and other United States aircraft fly in their training role? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is time for a review of low-level flying throughout the United Kingdom? Did he read the remarks of Henry Kissinger in the press recently, where he argued for a withdrawal of F111s to the USA?

Mr. Stanley: With regard to the final part of the hon. Gentleman's question, it remains our view, and it remains the view of the United States Administration, that the forward American deployment in western Europe is integral to the defence of western Europe. Low flying is a separate issue. It is subject to special rules that we have laid down. If the hon. Gentleman has any particular complaints in relation to his own constituency, we shall of course look at them.

Mr. Churchill: Is it not clear that the presence of United States' bases in Britain, and specifically the nuclear element, has played a key role in maintaining the peace and freedom of western Europe over the past 35 years? Is there not a real possibility that in the event of the implementation of either a Liberal or Socialist defence policy of getting rid of American cruise missiles and nuclear weapons from British soil, that could lead to the withdrawal of all US bases from this country, which would precipitate the disintegration of the NATO Alliance?

Mr. Stanley: I agree with my hon. Friend that if the official Opposition were able to implement the policies to which they are committed there would be profound reverberations throughout NATO and profound damage to NATO. The striking contrast between the defence position in Europe now compared with 50 years ago is that 30 years ago the Americans had withdrawn to the other side of the Atlantic. Today, the forward defence position of the

United States is seen to be inside western Europe, and that is why we can look forward with much greater confidence to continuing peace than our predecessors did in the 1930s.

Mr. Denzil Davies: If NATO, in a few weeks' time, agree, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State for Defence, to establish binary chemical bombs in Britain, at which of the bases to which the right hon. Gentleman has referred will they be located?

Mr. Stanley: The right hon. Gentleman was in the House when we dealt with a private notice question on that matter a few days ago. We made it clear then that we are considering the adoption or otherwise of a NATO force goal. I made it clear in answer to questions then that there were no plans by the United States to make any deployment of chemical weapons outside the United States in peace time.

Mr. Powley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as well as the important strategic defence presence of American bases in this country, there is an important economic factor in that presence for East Anglia and other areas? Does my right hon. Friend accept that if American bases were thrown out of this country there would be a serious economic loss? Jobs would be lost in East Anglia, in my constituency, as a result of any implemention of the Labour party's initiative on this issue.

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend will be glad to know that United States' forces in the United Kingdom are estimated to spend more than £600 million a year on goods and services, and that they sustain, directly or indirectly, some 30,000 jobs. I am sure that that fact will not be lost on the electorate of East Anglia or on the voters in my hon. Friend's constituency. I am sure that his constituents will give him the same support at the next general election as they gave at the last one.

Military Bases (Red Alert)

13. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions during the past 20 years bases of armed forces in the United Kingdom have been put on red alert other than for non-emergency practice purposes.

Mr. Stanley: As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) on 12 April 1984, there has been no warning of an imminent attack on the United Kingdom since 1945, nor have British or allied forces in this country been deployed to react to one.

Mr. Wigley: Can the Minister confirm that American forces based in the United Kingdom may be put on red or amber alert without prior notification or consultation with the United Kingdom Government?

Mr. Stanley: It has been made clear, not least by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, that if there is any question of a change in the nuclear alert state of United States' forces, the British Government would be informed.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Is my right hon. Friend not sick and tired of the perpetual attacks on the United States of America by the Opposition? Does he agree that the people of this country, who are responsible and concerned about defence and security, are grateful for the tremendous contribution that the United States makes to the defence of the Western world? Will my right hon. Friend tell us what it would cost the United Kingdom and western Europe to fill the gap that would be left if the United States' forces returned to North America?

Mr. Stanley: The cost would be absolutely enormous. I entirely endorse all the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend. The great majority of the British people are heartily sick of the non-stop anti-Americanism displayed by the Labour party.

Mr. Denzil Davies: In answer to a previous question the right hon. Gentleman said that chemical weapons would not be located in Britain——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman must related his question to the present question and not to a previous one.

Mr. Davies: We are concerned to know where those chemical weapons would be deployed in Britain.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The same rules must apply to everyone. This is a question on red alerts.

Mr. Davies: Would it be on a red alert or would it be in a time of tension, as the United States Senate has said?

Mr. Stanley: That is a totally academic point, because the issue at the moment is whether NATO adopts the United States force goal. The Americans have made it clear that there will be no deployment in peace time outside the United States.

Defence Commitments

15. **Mr. Viggers** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he plans any changes in the application of defence resources to the various defence commitments.

Mr. Younger: I will be taking decisions in the usual way on the use of defence resources, but I see no need for fundamental changes in our main defence commitments.

Mr. Viggers: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as defence costs rise, there will inevitably in due course be a need to review commitments? If commitments are to be reviewed, does he agree that that which is least consistent with fair burden-sharing among the NATO allies is the maintenance of 55,000 troops and a tactical air force in Germany?

Mr. Younger: If there were in the future a need to reconsider any of our main defence commitments, they would have to be the subject of careful consultation with NATO before they were carried out, but there is no such need at present.

Dr. Owen: Does the Secretary of State intend to announce the replacements for HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid and make a statement about——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is another question about that next.

Mr. Younger: I have already made it clear that I expect to consider those matters later on this summer.

Mr. Couchman: My right hon. Friend may know that I visited Swan Hunter's yard on Tyneside on Friday. Is he aware just how short of orders that fine yard is and how worrying it is to the workers there that they are still awaiting the O2 order of the type 23 frigate?

Mr. Younger: I am well aware of that position. As my hon. Friend knows, we are evaluating the bid that Swan Hunter has made for the type 23 frigate, No. O2.

Mr. Duffy: In view of yesterday's defence statement, will the Secretary of State assure the House that the commitment by his Government to provide a modern surface fleet of approximately 50 destroyers and frigates by the mid-1990s will be fulfilled?

Mr. Younger: I made it reasonably clear yesterday that while there will be some difficult decisions in the usual review of costings in the defence budget, I expect the general size of the Royal Navy to remain broadly as it is at present.

HMS Fearless and Intrepid

16. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the replacement of the amphibious ships HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which has just been given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Minister realise that the life of those important capital ships is fast coming to a close? *[Interruption.]* Unless a decision is taken soon on this matter, Britain's capacity to fulfil her NATO tasks on the flanks of NATO will be severely impaired. If he will not announce a decision now, will he at least announce when he will announce a decision or announce something that will help us in this matter?

Mr. Stanley: The life of those ships is not fast coming to a close, because Intrepid has just been refitted and Fearless will refit next year.

Mr. McNamara: I am sure that the Minister of State has enjoyed, as we have, the keenness of both wings of the alliance to get the headlines on those two ships. It is perhaps the only defence issue on which they are united.

Does not the postponement of decisions on those two ships, together with the postponement of other decisions, show the extent to which Trident is squeezing out the conventional defence of the United Kingdom? Are we not now witnessing the Army, and the Navy in particular, suffering at the expense of Trident expenditure as Ministers postpone decision after decision, hoping to be saved from them when they lose the next general election?

Mr. Stanley: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman on postponement. We have been saying for a long time that the decisions on the replacement of amphibious shipping will be taken this year. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has just repeated that.

Binary Chemical Weapons

17. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts to discuss proposals to equip the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation with binary chemical weapons.

Mr. Younger: As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces explained in answer to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 7 March, a force goal concerning the modernisation of United States' chemical weapon stocks is being considered collectively within NATO. My NATO colleagues and I will meet to discuss allied defence planning matters at the meeting of the Defence Planning Committee on 22 May.

Mr. Wallace: What would be the Secretary of State's attitude to the force goal, having regard to reports that the United States' current stock of chemical weapons is still serviceable, and having regard to the moral repugnance that those weapons create? Is it not a waste of valuable military resources on something which may not serve the purpose for which it was designed?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is aware that this is a matter for discussion within NATO. For our part, we believe that there is a vast and increasing capability in the Soviet Union. NATO and the United States should consider their response to that capability.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Fraser: In view of the shattering rejection that the Government's policies received at the polls last Thursday, not least in Lambeth and Finchley, what changes does the Prime Minister intend to make in policies or in Ministers, or does she contemplate leaving the job to someone else?

The Prime Minister: I thought it was a pretty shattering rejection of Labour policies.

Sir Hector Monro: In view of the importance of jobs in Scotland and exports from Britain, how did the discussions go with Korea and Japan on the Scotch whisky industry? Is there any further hope of additional exports to those countries?

The Prime Minister: The matter was raised with both countries, and I understood from the Japanese Prime Minister that it would be considered. I put our point robustly that they have promised to consider it before that and their promises have not so far come to very much.

Mr. Steel: Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that she will not be the most significant lady in the House this afternoon? Will she cease to listen to those of her colleagues, semi-detached or otherwise, who tell her that the Government's policies are not getting through? They are getting through—on unemployment, education and transport—and they are being wholly rejected.

The Prime Minister: I seem to remember that I had a similar question after the Crosby by-election. That was 18 months before our splendid win at the following general election.

Mrs. Peacock: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to congratulate the Conservatives in my constituency of Batley and Spen who won a Labour seat against all odds?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate those people on their wisdom in the local election and on their wisdom in choosing my hon. Friend as a Member for Parliament in the general election.

Q2. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Maxton: As the Prime Minister's party obtained only 16 per cent. of the vote in Scotland, as it no longer controls one regional council in Scotland, and as the Tory party will be lucky to retain five Conservative seats in Scotland at the next general election, does she really consider that there has been a shattering rejection of Labour party policies, or does she agree with the Secretary of State for Scotland, who said that the result reflected the Government's failure to do their job?

The Prime Minister: Opposition Members sometimes say that we have no mandate to govern Scotland, but the hon. Gentleman will recall that on that basis four out of the last five Labour Governments had no mandate to govern England.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the result of the local election in Wandsworth shows that people want a combination of low rates and efficient public services which offers value for money? Will my right hon. Friend continue to pursue policies at a national level that are designed to secure those objectives?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. As the months go by, many ratepayers will wish that they had followed Wandsworth's example.

Mr. Mark Hughes: To change the subject from electioneering, can the Prime Minister say what her Government's response will be to Christian Aid week, given their appalling record during the past seven years?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that our record has not been appalling. We led our European colleagues on granting and getting aid given to Ethiopia. We have an excellent record of aid to Ethiopia and other countries in Africa. However, I wish Christian Aid week well, and hope that people will give generously.

Q3. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dykes: As there has been a further fall in the rate of inflation, and as there is now a negligible Budget deficit, cannot we use those Government successes to build a policy of new investment in the public sector to stimulate the economy? Could not that take precedence over all other matters, including tax cuts?

The Prime Minister: We are certainly heading for the lowest inflation rate since the 1960s. My hon. Friend will be very much aware of the Government's excellent record on building roads, and, in particular, hospitals. It is excellent.

Mr. Kinnock: When NHS consultants in London and elsewhere record that Health Service cuts are seriously jeopardising standards of health care and the training of doctors, and are resulting in lengthening waiting lists and a loss of acute services, does the Prime Minister still say that the Health Service is safe in her hands?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, far more resources have been put into the Health Service—from £7·5 billion in the first year that we took over from Labour to £17·5 billion now. There has been a great increase in the number of those practising medicine, doctors and nurses, and a great increase in the number of those treated in the Health Service. I believe that they are treated better as medical services improve. The right hon. Gentleman knows the reason for the changes in London. Resources have been moved further north under policies started by a Labour Government. Does he now reject and renounce those policies?

Mr. Kinnock: Surely the Prime Minister must know, since everybody else does, that London's loss has not been anybody else's real gain. When she offers that litany—*[Interruption.]* Does the Prime Minister not even begin to understand the difference between statistics and people? Statistics do not feel pain; people do.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is wrong. Resources have been steadily moved further north for many years at the cost of we London Members—*[Interruption.]* I understand from the right hon. Gentleman that he is against that reallocation policy. I therefore assume that he is asking us to stop it.

Mr. Kinnock: Everybody knows that the RAWP policy was acceptable everywhere for as long as the NHS was expanding adequately. When it is being cut, that policy is a betrayal of the people, north, south, east and west.

The Prime Minister: There were two years under the Labour Government when the money spent on the Health Service was actually reduced. The fact is that expenditure was £7·5 billion in the last year of the Labour Government and £17·5 billion this year. Will the right hon. Gentleman learn a little arithmetic?

Q5. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pavitt: Will the Prime Mininster accept a little reality? On the question of the crisis in acute beds in London and the surrounding areas, is she aware that the protest by the 10 teaching hospitals, led by Mr. Richard Thompson of St. Thomas's, means that in the last fortnight nine of those hospitals have had to refuse the admission of emergency cases? Is she aware that because of the rationalisation of beds outside London the only place to which patients can come are the teaching hospitals in London? While congratulating the Minister for Health on giving our own Westminster hospital a two-year reprieve, may I ask whether the Prime Minister will do something about stopping the closure of the third major section, that is, the radiography and oncology departments, because we have already lost cardiac surgery and ophthalmology?

The Prime Minister: Provision for the Riverside health authority, which is what the hon. Gentleman is referring to, is affected by the reallocation procedure, partly because the population will fall by 10 per cent. in the next eight years. Despite that, there has been a steady increase in the number of patients treated and a small increase in the number of staff directly concerned with patient care. However, the RAWP procedure is being considered and the National Health Service management board will report by the end of the year. I take it that the Labour party wants the end of the reallocation procedure which it started. The midlands and the north have

benefited very greatly from the increase in Health Service expenditure, which has gone from £7·5 billion under Labour to £17·5 billion a year.

Mr. Higgins: Is it not completely wrong for the Leader of the Opposition to give the impression that there have been cuts in total resources for the Health Service, when in reality they have increased? Is he aware that constituencies like mine, which benefit from the reallocation of resources, welcome the change very much indeed?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. The Leader of the Opposition does not know that to go from £7·5 billion to £17·5 billion a year is an increase and not a cut.

Mr. Foot: Can the Prime Minister tell us whether any of the talk about a balanced team has reached her ears? Will she give us the assurance that her idea of a balanced team is the present incumbent of Conservative Central Office and Mr. Jeffrey Archer?

The Prime Minister: A balanced team won in 1979 and in 1983, and hopes to gain a third return ticket.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it remains just as much the case today as it was before last Thursday that living standards and social provision have to be earned and paid for? Does she agree that there will always be politicians who offer free beer, but that there are large numbers of electors who are nursing painful memories of the last binge, and that when it comes to the general election the people will vote soberly and sensibly for her policies of realism?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker, for policies which have brought an increased standard of living, increased production, increased wealth ownership throughout the country, better trade union reform and respect abroad. I believe the people will vote for us in a third election.

Q7. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lloyd: Has the Prime Minister seen reports that there are now 13 million people in Britain living in poverty? Can she say whether this is a record of which she is proud, or is the real truth that her Government have pauperised millions of our fellow citizens?

The Prime Minister: The standard of living, both of those in work and of those on social security, is higher than it has ever been before.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree, in the light of the trust and support that we showed to the United States in its fight against terrorism recently, that there will be profound dismay throughout the whole of the United Kingdom if we do not have immediate approval of the extradition treaty?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The President and Administration are doing their best to try to bring that about. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has gone to the United States to say how strongly we feel about it. I hope that both will be successful in achieving the desired result.

Mr. Mason: Will the Prime Minister tell the House what punishment she intends to mete out to her right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, who now has publicly portrayed her as the lame duck Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend has asked me to reply. He did in fact make many robust policy points on Sunday with which I wholly agree.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a point of order for you arising out of Prime Minister's questions. We all appreciate the difficulty that you have in trying to make sure that all groups within the House have a chance to speak, especially at Prime Minister's Question Time. Some of us have noticed that, since the interview that the Leader of the House gave on television last Sunday, there are two discernible groups in the Tory camp. What we are suggesting, Mr. Speaker, is that in future, so that you get the balanced ticket right in the House of Commons, instead of calling just anybody from the Conservative Benches, you should make sure you call the Biffen faction and the Thatcher faction, so that that balance can be continued.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member may like to know that I never watch television on Sunday.

Teachers (Pay)

3.32 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the interim settlement of the teachers' pay dispute.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): Last Friday the Burnham primary and secondary committee agreed to increase teachers' salaries in England and Wales from 1 April 1986 by 5·5 per cent. or £520, whichever is the greater. This agreement was reached following undertakings to the management panel from all the teacher associations represented on the teachers' panel. The entire teachers' panel has given an assurance that there will be a return to peace and calm in our schools immediately. The entire teachers' panel notes and supports the ACAS talks and will co-operate in every respect. The teachers' panel agrees that the payment at 1 April 1986 is without prejudice to any subsequent consideration by Burnham in the light of progress in the on-going talks embracing all the aspects being discussed under the aegis of ACAS.

This settlement clears the way for constructive discussion and negotiation under the leadership of the panel appointed by ACAS. It does not prejudge the outcome of the ACAS process and it is to that exercise that teachers, employers and the Government must look for a satisfactory longer-term outcome to the complex of issues raised by the recent dispute. I very much welcome the fact that the National Union of Teachers, which represents a substantial group of teachers in our schools, will now play a full part. We must all welcome the assurances now given about an immediate return to peace and calm in our schools.

The ACAS-led negotiations are addressing a range of issues — pay levels and structures, teachers' duties, teacher appraisal and career development and future negotiating machinery. Clearly, no Secretary of State can commit a Government in advance to the outcome of such an exercise, but I do wish the talks well and hope that they can result in satisfactory resolution of the fundamental problems arising from the present pay structure, the lack of definition about teachers' professional obligations, and performances appraisal and career development. The Government will consider the conclusions carefully and fully when those are available.

Mr. Radice: Does the Secretary of State accept that last week's agreement brings the prospect of peace and calm to our schools, ensures that the major teachers' union is involved in the ACAS talks and gives teachers a needed pay rise? Does he accept also that, while he and his Ministers have been content to stand on the sidelines as our schools have been disrupted, the Labour party has brought the two sides together and has been instrumental in achieving last Friday's agreement? Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that for a long-term settlement to be achieved and for peace to be guaranteed in future, as he hopes, the Government must recognise the need for additional resources? I hope that the right hon. Gentleman's successor will be more successful in persuading the Treasury than he has been.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am glad that the National Union of Teachers has agreed to co-operate fully in the negotiations, therefore acccepting that teachers' pay and teachers' duties must be considered at the same forum. I hope that the hon. Member for Durham accepts that——

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Durham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. He is not the Member for Durham.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer to the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice). I hope that he now accepts what he has flinched from accepting before—that what teachers are paid and teachers' duties should be considered together.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is it not true that there has never been a more potent moment in history for the improvement of the education of our children, the uplifting of the morale of teachers, and the improved provision of children's education and that my right hon. Friend is the man who has brought the country to this position? Does he agree that teachers' pay is about 16 per cent. better now than it was when the Government came into office? Will he repudiate the Labour party for locking out the NUT from negotiations with the local authorities recently?

Sir Keith Joseph: I can agree with some of what my hon. Friend says. There are some long-standing and crucial issues for the quality of education; these can emerge if the negotiations are successful, and I hope that they are.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Is it not a fact that, but for the intransigence of the Government and the Secretary of State, this progress could have been achieved 16 months ago? If that had happened, the disruption which has been caused by ordinary people who are not used to taking such action would not have continued. Is it not a more serious fact that the disruption will begin again unless some new money from the Government—never mind the local authorities—is put on the table to solve the problem and to educate our children in a proper way?

Sir Keith Joseph: Unfortunately, the NUT walked out of the negotiations in 1984 that could have led to this sort of result much earlier. That led the teachers' unions to reject negotiations on the quantified conditional offer of extra money from the Government and delayed the present negotiations for many months.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Northwich, North): Bearing in mind the damaging effect of the dispute on children in our schools and the way in which teachers have conducted themselves during the dispute, will my right hon. Friend look again at the suggestion that has been made over and over again by Conservative Members, that there should be a professional teachers council to help to raise the standards and morale in the teaching profession?

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes, if enough teachers approach me with a willingness to see such a council set up, but it would have to be subject to the Government's satisfaction that such a council would serve the interests of children as well as of teachers.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): While we greatly welcome the return of the NUT to the ACAS talks on sensible terms, does the Secretary of State not accept that ongoing talks need an ongoing Minister and that if we are to have constructive education policies we

must have faith in the continuity of the head of the Department? Does he realise how useless it is to education in general that a dearth of policies should now be coming from the Department which he nominally heads?

Sir Keith Joseph: The last thing that I have been accused of in recent years is a dearth of policies.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Is my right hon. Friend aware that continual harassment by the NUT is still taking place in many parts of the country, including refusal to co-operate with PTAs, absence from supervising lunch hour engagements and no parent-teacher meetings in many parts of the country? In view of this outrageous behaviour by the NUT, will my right hon. Friend ensure that ongoing teacher assessment is enshrined in any settlement that is reached?

Sir Keith Joseph: Teacher appraisal is one of the subjects that is being considered by the ACAS working party. As for the first part of my hon. Friend's question, I very much hope that the NUT's undertaking that peace and calm would return to our schools will be fulfilled.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): In view of the Secretary of State's comments about the National Union of Teachers, will he concede that teachers in particular and education in general would have been the poorer without the efforts of Fred Jarvis and his colleagues. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] They deserve the support of both sides of the House of Commons.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am very sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I missed the last part of the right hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Ashley: May I rephrase it, Mr. Speaker? I am sorry that the Secretary of State is deaf. I shall repeat my question for him. The point I was making was that teachers in particular and education in general would be the poorer without the efforts of Fred Jarvis and his colleagues and that they deserve the support of both sides of the House of Commons.

Sir Keith Joseph: On no possible account could I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. It was that particular individual and his executive who wrecked the negotiations in 1984 and delayed negotiations for months and months in 1985 and 1986.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the dispute has been extremely damaging to children and very worrying to parents. Does he agree that the settlement of the dispute is widely welcomed on this side of the House? Will he take steps to arrange the payment of the £1·25 billion on a shorter time scale, as that would do a great deal to improve teacher morale, particularly if assessment were to be stitched closely into the agreement?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree with the first part of my hon. Friend's question. As to the second part, payment of the additional money specified by the Government depends upon satisfaction of the conditions laid down, and that is the subject of the discussions that are now taking place under ACAS.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Although the whole House will agree that the return of peace, high morale and high standards in our schools is urgently needed, does the Secretary of State not agree that if that objective is not rapidly achieved, the prospects for the new examination will be diminished, which means that it will be impossible to introduce it in September this year?

Sir Keith Joseph: I have to say to the hon. Gentleman and the House that the disruption in our schools is entirely due to—[HON. MEMBERS: "You."]—the decision of the executives of the large teachers' unions, backed by a number of their members. I have constantly said that it is wrong and unprofessional to disrupt the education of children.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Although we welcome the agreement, is my right hon. Friend aware that I hope that it will not be paid for by the closure of further community schools such as Huntcliff in Saltburn-on-Sea in my constituency?

Sir Keith Joseph: I admire my hon. Friend's ingenious supplementary question.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Although the Secretary of State now seeks to distance himself from and not intervene in the ACAS discussions, does he accept that it was his pressure and his manipulation behind the scenes that prevented an earlier settlement? Does he further accept that the current discussions are a sign of the failure of the Government's policy of trying to use children and parents to batter the NUT?

Sir Keith Joseph: That is a grossly distorted point of view. It is the Government's intention to bring about improved quality of teaching for children of all abilities in our schools. For that purpose, we judge it necessary to open up possibilities for many more promotions, a much more promising career structure for teachers, a satisfactory pay structure for teachers and appraisal and more in-service training for teachers. If those conditions are satisfied, we shall ask the taxpayer to find additional money.

NEW MEMBERS

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath:

Mrs. Elizabeth Lois Shields, for Ryedale.

Patrick Allan McLoughlin, Esq., for Derbyshire, West.

Hospitals (Newcastle)

3.49 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The proposed closure of Health Service facilities in Newcastle hospitals".

The matter is important because the latest proposals for cuts follow the recent most severe assaults on Health Service provision in the northern region. The matter is urgent because the proposals became public knowledge today, and today this devastation of Health Service provision in the north should be stopped in its tracks. Our community is not prepared to tolerate the wicked, unfair and unequal closures imposed on our region.

I am grateful to Newcastle's local newspaper, *The Journal*, for making public the latest outrages. A further 166 hospital beds are to go in Newcastle. This time the excuse is forecasts of population nine years hence. Yet the cuts are to be made now, lengthening waiting lists across the northern region.

Already under the existing provision, 77 per cent. of cases which were urgent last September waited more than a month for treatment. The treatment of urgent cases in the northern region is far worse than the national average.

The position has been exacerbated yet further by the Government's consistent failure to bring funding into line even with national average provision under the resource allocation working party revenue targets. In a recently published letter, Professor Sam Shuster said:

"In Newcastle last year, money was available for replacement of less than 10 per cent. of required medical equipment in the teaching hospital. In December we had to reduce spending by 10 per cent. and in January our district health authority found itself short of £3 million, not from overspending but from Government's failure to honour its responsibility for inflationary increases in rates and salaries. The deficit will be met by closing a children's hospital and orthopaedic and dermatology wards although this will seriously affect the work of several departments."

The steady and consistent closure of Health Service provision in the northern region is strongly opposed by the overwhelming majority both of our community and of the region's publicly elected representatives. This outrage should be stopped now, and if this Government will not stop it, the next Government most certainly will.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The proposed closure of Health Service facilities in Newcastle hospitals."

I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House. I hope that he will find other methods of bringing it before us.

Para-Pace Limited, Cramlington

3.53 pm

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The peremptory closure, without notice, of the Para-Pace Limited factory in Cramlington by the management, the disappearance of valuable machinery purchased with regional grant funds for that factory, and the refusal to pay any wages and redundancy payments to the entire work force."

The facts of the case are short and disgraceful. The company received substantial regional grant funds as recently as March 1985. Last week, without any notice to the work force, the factory was closed by the management, valuable machinery was removed, no wages were paid, and the management, in the form of the principal shareholder, did a moonlight flit, disappeared and cannot be found. I drew those matters to the attention of the Department of Trade and Industry, and yesterday the Minister responsible kindly saw me. Both he and his officials were extremely helpful, and I pay tribute to them for that.

The plain fact remains that the entire work force, which consists of women, has been left high and dry without wages, without redundancy payments and with no prospect of recovering them as the law stands. There has been no receivership and no liquidation, so they cannot obtain payments to which they would otherwise be entitled from the Department of Employment. It is a disgraceful state of affairs, and I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider urgently granting the facilities for this matter to be debated today, notwithstanding the important debates that have already been arranged.

This is typical of what happens in the north-east, when some people obtain regional grants but, when they are in financial difficulties, do a moonlight flit, throw out the work force without paying them, and remove machinery —bought with regional grant funds—which, in one way or another, leaves the region and disappears. That is an abuse of public money and a denial of the rights of the work force. In this case, the workers have been left helpless. I have advised them to apply for a liquidation so as to rank as preferential creditors, and the documents for that will be drawn up in my office this afternoon.

It is important that we discuss this matter urgently to find out what the Government can do about it. I ask you to intervene in this disgraceful state of affairs, Mr. Speaker. A serious fraud has been committed. I have given the name of the individual to the Minister, but I shall not mention it in public. However, I ask you to assist me in obtaining time today to debate this matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The peremptory closure, without notice, of the Para-Pace Limited factory in Cramlington by the management."

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the decison that I have to take is whether to give this matter precedence over the business set down for today and tomorrow. I regret that I

do not consider the matter that the hon. Member has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the motions relating to Statutory Instruments.

Ordered,

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 3) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 813) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Quota and Other Reliefs) (Amendment) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 787) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Question agreed to.

Shops (No. 2)

3.57 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to reform the law relating to Sunday trading and to amend the Shops Acts.

Those of us in the Conservative party who opposed the Government's Shops Bill always argued that a fair compromise was possible between the need to reform the law and the desire to keep Sunday as a special day.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South West): What about amendments?

Mr. Stanbrook: We were dealing only with the Second Reading.

That was not the view of the Government, who believed that the only way to reform the law was to abolish all restrictions on Sunday trading. It was their view that the position of Sunday would not thereby be harmed. As the House knows, the Government's Bill was rejected, and we are told that it will not be restored.

Therefore, we are left with the situation in which almost everyone agrees that the present law is unsatisfactory and the need for reform urgent. Ministers actually gave these grounds for introducing the Bill in the first place. If it is true, it is hard to see how they can put off legislating, or encouraging private Members' legislation, in a Parliament that still has another two years to run. On the other hand, many Conservative Members want to assist the Government out of the dilemma by suggesting the main lines of a compromise that they, at least, would be prepared to support.

My Bill is an attempt to produce that compromise. It starts from the basic principle that Sunday is a special day, the status of which should be supported by legal restrictions on the opening of shops on Sunday. Subject to that principle, it proposes the deregulation of Sunday trading for all small shops and the removal of restrictions on garden centres. For larger shops that serve the needs of the public in their leisure and recreational activities, including do-it-yourself shops, there is provision for opening on Sundays for a limited period at the option of the local authority. There is provision for holiday resorts and tourist areas. No shop that opens lawfully now would be subject to further restrictions.

Like all compromises, the Bill will not wholly satisfy anyone. It will certainly not please those large enterprises which seek to make Sunday just another trading day. As for most small shops, it is fear of losing trade to the big stores that would drive them to open on Sundays. Without that fear, it is unlikely that many would open except to meet existing local demand. The Bill defines small shops as those with no more than three persons engaged in the business of the shop present at any one time. Obviously, this and other details would be open to amendment in Committee—*[Laughter.]*—on a free vote.

The passage of this Bill, or something like it, would put to rest a controversy which has bedevilled local government, undermined the law, frustrated commercial enterprise and affronted the consciences of millions of people. It will make the law of Sunday trading simple, fair and enforceable, with the minimum of anomalies, while at the same time preserving Sunday as a special day, a day predominantly of rest, recreation and family life. I ask the House to give me leave to bring in the Bill.

4.1 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Member seek to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Baldry: I wish to oppose the Bill, Sir. I do not intend to take up time by dividing the House, but I believe that a number of points should be made.

I recognise that my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) is making an honest and honourable attempt to——

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I know what the hon. Member is going to say.

Mr. Cook: I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker. I thought that it was against the rules of the House for an hon. Member to object to a ten-minute Bill if he did not intend to divide the House.

Mr. Speaker: Normally, if an hon. Member seeks to oppose a ten-minute Bill, his feet should follow his voice.

Mr. Baldry: Let us see where we get, Mr. Speaker. A number of points need to be made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington suggests that we can get around the present anomaly on Sunday trading by drawing up a number of categories of shops and saying that certain categories should be allowed to open on Sundays. Who will define a small shop? My hon. Friend says that it is a shop in which only three people are employed. Clearly, that will result in enforcement problems, and inspectors will need constantly to check whether shops are employing more than three people. Shops will need constantly to notify local authorities of the number of people they employ.

Garden centres will be allowed to open. That is fine, but what is the logic in allowing a person to buy a pot from a garden centre but not from a local hardware shop? We understand that shops in tourist areas will be allowed to open. There will be considerable resentment in Banbury if shops in Stratford-upon-Avon are allowed to open on Sundays to attract tourists but shops in Banbury are not.

I understand that shops involved in leisure and recreational activities will be allowed to open on Sundays. Does that mean that clothing shops will be allowed to sell leisurewear on Sundays but not formal suits and that chemists will be allowed to sell sunglasses and suntan lotion but not other items to people who want to go on the beaches?

With all due respect to my hon. Friend, I suggest that the Bill will simply replace one set of anomalies with another. That is not the way forward to resolve what I think all hon. Members agree is a ridiculous piece of legislation. I suggest that the best way forward still is total deregulation, with adequate and proper safeguards for those who may be employed on Sundays.

I do not intend to take up time by dividing the House, but I believe that those points had to be made. If other hon. Members wish to divide the House, that is their right.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the hon. Member will bear in mind what I have said.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):

The House divided: Ayes 64, Noes 25.

Division No174] **[4.05 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Sir Richard
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Burt, Alistair
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Cormack, Patrick
Dorrell, Stephen
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Latham, Michael
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Meadowcroft, Michael
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mudd, David
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Trotter, Neville
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Adam Butler and
Mr. Patrick Thompson.

NOES

Ashby, David
Baldry, Tony
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Faulds, Andrew
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freud, Clement
Hayes, J.
Hicks, Robert
Howarth, G. *(Cannock)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
McCrindle, Robert
Norris, Steven
Osborn, Sir John
Portillo, Michael
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thurnham, Peter
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Neil Hamilton and
Mr. Greg Knight.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Ivor Stanbrook, Mr. Jack Aspinwall, Mr. W. Benyon, Sir Bernard Braine, Sir Adam Butler, Mr. Roger Gale, Sir Raymond Gower, Mr. Andrew Hunter, Sir Kenneth Lewis, Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson, Sir Peter Mills and Sir William van Straubenzee.

SHOPS (NO. 2)

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook accordingly presented a Bill to reform the law relating to Sunday trading and to amend the Shops Acts: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday, 6 June, and to be printed. [Bill 159.]

Mr. Bob Hayward (Kingswood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I draw your attention to the fact that the Division bells are not working in Dean's Yard, which I believe is the most remote point for offices of hon.

Members from the Division Lobbies. Therefore, it has become impossible for some of us to know whether a Division is taking place and we are likely to miss any Divisions that take place today, or until the bells are working.

Mr. Speaker: I shall have the matter looked into and ensure that the Division bells are working later this evening.

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Speaker: Before we proceed to this important debate on civil nuclear matters, I must tell the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. I must also announce to the House that no fewer than 35 right hon. and hon. Members have already indicated their wish to take part in the debate. Therefore, I propose to have a 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 o'clock and 8 o'clock. I appreciate that that may mean that some Privy Councillors will be caught in that 10-minute limit, but I am sure that they will accept that is fair to all concerned.

4.17 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the steps taken by the Government to keep the House and the public informed of the consequences for the United Kingdom of the accident at the nuclear plant at Chernobyl in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; endorses the Government's commitment to the safety of the complete nuclear fuel cycle in the United Kingdom; and in that context approves the Government's first stage response on 2nd May to the Environment Committee's report on radioactive waste (House of Commons Paper No. 191), setting out as it does the principles against which current proposals to dispose of low-level radioactive waste can be considered.

I note, Mr. Speaker, that you have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, and I shall refer to that later. You have not selected the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment and I do not criticise that at all. None the less, I agree with the terms of his amendment, which makes it clear that there is no intention in holding this debate today that it will any way pre-empt a full response to the Environment Committee's report on radioactive waste management. That will be given full consideration in due course.

I should like to begin by giving a report on the latest position in the United Kingdom, arising out of the Chernobyl accident. But first I express on behalf of the whole House our sorrow to hear of the deaths of more Russian citizens as a result of this accident, and the continuing grave illness of others.

The House will know from my statement of 6 May that as soon as news of the accident was received, the standing arrangements for monitoring were stepped up. The remnants of the cloud arrived over the United Kingdom on Friday 2 May. Since then a daily bulletin has been issued to the press, giving the results of the monitoring in non-technical language. We have also made available all the raw data on which the bulletins were based. The bulletins were issued first by the National Radiological Protection Board, working closely with officials of my Department and other Departments concerned, and from Tuesday 6 May by my Department and the Scottish Office. At all times, including the long weekend of 3 to 5 May, Ministers were kept closely informed of developments, and I was in touch with colleagues.

Radioactivity has been measured in the air, in water, in milk and on foodstuffs. From Monday 5 May to Saturday 10 May, the Government advised people to avoid drinking fresh rain-water over long periods. Apart from that, levels of radioactivity at no time, and in no place,

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

approached the levels at which special action needs to be considered. Those levels are well below the levels at which action has to be taken.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Several of my constituents have asked what is the difference between rain-water taken from tanks outside one's house and consumed there and then and the same rain-water when it falls in reservoirs and enters our normal water supplies.

Mr. Baker: Rain-water that is caught in a can and used for drinking is in a much more concentrated form than when it falls into a reservoir or falls on to the ground and is diluted.

I was referring to the levels at which special action has to be taken. For instance, the maximum level of radiation found in milk was 471 becquerels per litre. That compares to 2,000 becquerels per litre, which is the level at which action ought to be considered.

The highest levels recorded as a result of the cloud occurred over the weekend of 3 to 5 May. Since then levels have been falling every day, and are now either at or approaching normal background levels in all parts of the country.

I can confirm that no special precautions are needed. I repeat what I said to the House last week. It is safe to drink milk. It is safe to drink tap-water. It is not necessary to take iodine tablets. In particular — as we have received many questions on the point—I can confirm that no special precautions are necessary in giving fresh milk to infants and pregnant women.

My Department and the Scottish Office will continue to issue regular bulletins so long as they are needed. As long as there are no further discharges from Chernobyl, the incident may be regarded as over for this country by the end of the week, although its traces will remain.

The extensive and regular monitoring confirms the very low level of exposure of United Kingdom citizens. That is not unexpected, given the distance from the Ukraine and the dispersal and dilution that occurred en route. It is nevertheless right that those arrangements were set in hand as soon as the news of the accident was received. The House would not have expected otherwise.

I now refer to the wider consequences of Chernobyl. Chernobyl will have a profound effect on public opinion and on the assessment of nuclear power not just by scientists or Governments, but by ordinary people in this country who vividly have been brought face to face with the possible consequences of a nuclear accident. It has underlined the heavy responsibilities that go with nuclear power. I should like to draw some lessons from it.

First, nuclear accidents do not respect national boundaries. Each country with a nuclear programme has a responsibility to ensure that it is regulated properly and safely. It also has a responsibility to ensure that if something does go wrong, information is passed to and, where necessary, help is sought rapidly from other countries. The agreement reached at the Tokyo economic summit to recommend that an international convention be drawn up, which will commit the parties to report and exchange information in the event of nuclear emergencies. it to be welcomed.

Secondly, what should be our response as politicians in a free and open democracy? Trust has to be built. It is no good scientists or politicians simply asserting in a Panglossian way that everything is all right with nuclear power. The case must be reargued with complete openness. The only way of maintaining that confidence is to show that every individual brick in the edifice is sound.

Even the most extreme opponent of the industry should be prepared to accept, provided it can achieve the standards of safety he demands, that nuclear electricity provides secure supplies and some environmental advantages. On the other hand, the most passionate supporter of the industry should accept that if a serious accident does occur, results are far more serious than in most other industries. The stakes, both of potential benefit and cost, are high, which is why such passions surround the industry.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): In view of the concern that the Secretary of State has just expressed, can he explain why the authorities in Scotland are going ahead with putting fuel into the new advanced gas-cooled reactor station at Torness in my constituency, apparently several months before it was originally planned, and years before there is any need to commission new nuclear generating capacity in this country?

Mr. Baker: I shall refer to the nuclear industry. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy will wind up the debate, and I think that he will be able to deal with that specific point. I shall deal with the central issue about nuclear power.

The Government continue to believe that, subject as it is to the most stringent safeguards, nuclear generation has an essential contribution to make to the provision of electric power. We have to remember that by the end of the century 78 per cent. of electricity in France will be generated by nuclear power. In Germany, it is expected to be approaching 45 per cent. That compares with about 18 per cent. in the United Kinguom at present. Those two countries are not likely to halt or reverse their nuclear programmes, because neither has over-abundant supplies of fossil fuels. Nuclear electricity will give their industries a competitive edge. Already, French electricity is the cheapest in Europe. However, having said that, and going back to the benefits and costs, I wish to re-emphasise the fact that safety is the key issue. Safety must be the supreme consideration, particularly in design, in operation and in disposal.

I have just set out the Government's view on nuclear power. I hope that my shadow, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), will be able to set out the definitive Labour party position on nuclear power and go a little further than in his interview on Radio 4 this morning. I am pleased to see that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is in his place to hammer home his own support. When it comes to the Labour party sorting itself out on nuclear power, I can only recall the words of a former leader of the Labour party commenting on supposed Tory disarray:

"I do not want to intrude into private grief."

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle) *rose——*

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth) *rose——*

Mr. Baker: I shall give way in a moment.

A third lesson of the Chernobyl accident is that openness is also a necessary condition, not only because it is right in itself, but because every now and then some outside critic will be right about something. Openness is

not a public relations technique; it is part of the process of the critical analysis that we need. We are already far more open than we have to be——

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): That is not so.

Mr. Baker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will contain himself for a moment.

We are already far more open than we have to be, but where public safety and assurance are involved, improvements must always be looked for. The Secretary of State for the Environment is one of the regulators and guarantors of the public interest. He has to be vigilant and must take a critical and probing approach to safety. He has to be sure that no undue risk is taken.

The nuclear industry in the United Kingdom is the most regulated industry in the country, subject to no fewer than 15 acts of Parliament and sets of regulations; and in England to the scrutiny of the nuclear installations inspectorate, the radiochemical inspectorate and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, with parallel arrangements in Scotland and Wales.

If an incident should occur, there are clear guidelines on what should be reported and how such incidents should be handled. The guidelines were explained to the House by the then Under-Secretary of State for Energy, my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) on 26 July 1982.

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I should like to finish this passage, and then I shall give way.

Reports are required as quickly as possible — normally within 24 hours. All incidents involving death, serious injury, substantial over-exposure to radiation or a release of radioactivity that requires special action to be taken are reported to Ministers under those arrangements. They are also reported to local liaison committees and the local population, as well as to the work force. All reports to Ministers are published each quarter by the Health and Safety Executive. The most recent report, dated 3 April, referred to three incidents in the fourth quarter of 1985. None of them involved any radiological hazard.

In addition to those formal reporting arrangements, there are agreed interdepartmental arrangements for other incidents to be reported to the authorising Departments — in England, my Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Both those Departments have inspectorates whose job it is to monitor operations and ensure that the terms of the authorisations for discharge or disposal of waste are being complied with. In the course of that work they receive a good deal of information about day-to-day operations, including details of minor incidents — many of them quite trivial. The incident at Dungeness A power station on 1 April, which *The Observer* reported, was of that type. The amount of radioactivity discharged was tiny — no more than hospital incinerators are allowed to discharge every day without special authorisation.

With regard to such minor incidents, I have given instructions within my Department that Ministers should be told of all incidents involving the release of radioactivity, however small, so that we can decide whether they are sufficiently important to be made public. That should make it unnecessary to introduce any changes to the formal reporting arrangements. However, we are quite willing to look at the arrangements to see whether any changes might be helpful.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is much concern about the safety of pressurised water reactors, especially in the light of the Three Mile Island disaster? Whatever the Secretary of State may say, all Opposition Members are united in the belief that the building of PWRs should not go ahead. Will the Secretary of State tell us whether he is in favour of the PWR programme going ahead? If so, is he in favour of it going ahead before the next general election?

Mr. Baker: We are awaiting the report from Sir Frank Layfield on that matter. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy and I have a quasi-judicial position in the inquiries. The Government have made their position clear on their commitment to the PWR programme.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way. On the issue of openness, he has been careful to avoid saying anything about the application of the Official Secrets Act 1911 to certain aspects of civil nuclear power. Is not the application of that Act one aspect that prevents openness and proper debate?

On the specific incident at Dungeness, to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, does he recognise that his Administration changed the rules which had been introduced by the previous Labour Government? The Labour Government insisted that such incidents had to be reported to Ministers and regulatory bodies and also had to be reported publicly. It is essential that the public and the press should have the right to this information, not just Ministers and regulating bodies, which may then decide whether the public should be informed. Frankly, that is unacceptable.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman will know that there are many incidents of a minor nature in nuclear installations. I hesitate to use the word "trivial", but they are of a minor nature. As I have announced in relation to these incidents, they will be reported to Ministers within my Department—*[Interruption.]* I would like to proceed on this matter one stage at a time.

The local inspector in my Department received the information about the incident at Dungeness. He decided that it was of such a minor nature that he did not report it back. I do not criticise my official for making that judgment. I believe that he made the correct decision. On the other hand, it is right that Ministers should be told, so that they can make an assessment.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Baker: I should like to answer the points raised by the hon. Member for Copeland before I give way.

The hon. Member for Copeland asked whether the supply of information should go beyond Ministers. I am prepared and willing to consider the publication of all these minor incidents. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that some are very minor indeed, and we must decide whether all these incidents need to be reported. I shall be guided by an attitude and predilection to be open in these matters, because that is the best way.

Mr. Benn *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I have ensured that the serious incidents that we know about are automatically made public when they occur. If there is a general feeling, as a result of this debate, that these incidents should be made open and published—and we must remember that many of these incidents are very minor — I shall respond to that reaction.

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for responding in that genuine manner and for opening this point for debate.

If, as the right hon. Gentleman says, these incidents are trivial, there is all the more reason for not keeping them quiet. Has not the keeping quiet of the Dungeness incident resulted in it covering seven front page columns of a major national newspaper? The impression was created that the authorities did not want to disclose the fact that the accident had occurred. Does the Secretary of State agree that that example is simply playing into the hands of those people who may want to exaggerate or exploit the nature of these matters?

Mr. Baker: I have great sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's comments, and that is why I have decided to make the change. As I have said, I am prepared to make information about incidents available, if the House wishes. When that was done in the past, many trivial incidents were reported. However, if the House wishes to have details about each incident, there is no reason why it should not.

Dr. M. S. Müller (East Kilbride): Will the Secretary of State consider extending the publication of these incidents into all areas in which radioactivity is released into the air, including hospitals?

Mr. Baker: There are, of course, more than 5,000 sites where operations involving radioactivity are registered by the nuclear installations inspectorate. I accept the anxiety about these matters that hon. Members have expressed.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): I apologise for intervening in my right hon. Friend's speech. However, I entirely accept his arguments about the regulation and control of nuclear installations in Britain. What steps does he intend to take with regard to French installations which lie beside the English Channel facing the south and south-west of England? Our controls may be perfect, but I am not sure that controls are perfect elsewhere.

Mr. Baker: There is a treaty obligation between France and the United Kingdom for information to be exchanged on any incidents. That is important, because France has many power stations.

Mr. Benn: The Secretary of State referred to the period when I was Secretary of State for Energy. Following the leak at Windscale, which was not reported to me, I laid down that every incident, however small, should not only be reported to the Minister but should be published. This Government have changed that practice. Will the right hon. Gentleman answer the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)? Is he now prepared to return to the practice of publishing every incident? The reason for that is perfectly straightforward. Some of the more serious nuclear accidents may occur through human error, and often the small examples of human error, which come out in the practice of full publication, alert people to the true nature of the risk that they may be facing.

Mr. Baker: I believe that I am right in recalling that the right hon. Gentleman made the change that he has just described. However, I understand that his Department was swamped by a large number of small and minor incidents. I believe that arrangements were made—I will check on this — for some restraint and concentration upon the major incidents. What I have announced today meets what the House wants. I have made the announcement for the reasons put forward by the hon. Member for Copeland. I believe that it is better to be frank and open in these matters.

It has become clear in the past two or three weeks that generally people in this country have a considerable lack of knowledge about radiation and radioactivity. I am sure that the population has learnt a great deal in the course of the past three weeks. I am sure that, as a result of what they have learnt, they will have a more balanced understanding and assessment of the risks.

Mr. Stefan Terlezki (Cardiff, West) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I will give way to my hon. Friend, but I must then begin to move on to consider radioactivity.

Mr. Terlezki: If, God forbid, a catastrophe on the scale of Chernobyl occurred in this country, would the labour force inside and outside the reactor, have some kind of protective clothing to protect them as they walk around the buildings? About an hour ago I received a message from Kiev to the effect that people are working around the reactor at Chernobyl without protective clothing. Only the police and officials are wearing protective clothing. The other people working in the Chernobyl area are prisoners.

Mr. Baker: As I have made clear this afternoon, if there is the possibility of a serious accident at a nuclear installation, that will be reported immediately to the local community and to the work force. There are arrangements and plans for dealing with such emergencies which involve the use of protective clothing.

Mr. Hardy *rose*——

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *rose*——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I have been generous in yielding to hon. Members from both sides of the House.

The Government's action on the disposal of radioactive waste is a good example of the approach which I consider is essential if there is to be a proper understanding of the issues involved.

First, let me deal with the scale of the problem of radioactive waste.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way.

The amounts of radioactive waste that we can expect to arise by the year 2000 are not large compared with the amounts of waste generated by other industries. Society nevertheless has a responsibility for their safe disposal. Indeed, if we were to close down all nuclear power stations tomorrow, we would still have to dispose of existing wastes, as well as those arising from the decommissioning.

It is not a responsibility that should be left to later generations. By the year 2000 there will be 380,000 cu m

of low level waste for disposal, and by the year 2030 1,200,000 cu m. I am aware that hon. Members have some difficulty in envisaging the volumes that are involved——

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): A hell of a lot.

Mr. Baker: I can tell the Leader of the Opposition, in a simile that he will understand, that by the year 2000 that will be equivalent to about six towers the size of the Victoria tower, and 19 towers the size of the Victoria tower by the year 2030.

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue.

The only national site for low level waste is at Drigg in Cumbria.

Mr. Home Robertson: Why not in the Victoria tower?

Mr. Baker: I think that there would be just a slight objection to that.

Assuming that available techniques for compaction are used by 1987, and that it proves possible to develop the whole of the existing site, Drigg will be full by about 2010. Given the time needed to investigate, consult, and develop any subsequent site, it is only prudent to press ahead now as quickly as possible with the investigation of another site.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): Will my right hon. Friend look closely again at the figures for Drigg, including the figures for low-level waste that is supposed to go outside Drigg? As a result of answers from his Department, for which I am most grateful, it appears that, compacted in the manner which it has in mind, the total amount which needs to go outside Drigg is only one fifth of the amount which needs to go into Drigg if also compacted.

Mr. Baker: I have looked carefully into the figures and also at the effect of compaction. If compaction is started, as we hope, in 1987 in Drigg, the figures that I have announced will still stand. I shall be happy to look at them again, but I have looked at them again and again, and I am satisfied that those figures reflect the waste that society will have to dispose of.

On 2 May the Government published their response to those recommendations of the Environment Select Committee that were directly relevant to the development of a near-surface facility. In this we welcomed the Committee's conclusions that safe disposal routes were available in the United Kingdom and that indefinite storage presented unacceptable risks. We also reaffirmed our commitment to the objectives for the management of radioactive wastes set out in the White Paper, "Radioactive Waste Management", published in July 1982.

Since 1976 the previous Labour Government and our own have sought a solution to this problem. Therefore, I was rather taken aback to hear the Liberal party spokesman on this morning's "Today" radio programme say that we were rushing into this. This is a policy that the previous Labour Government and our own have been trying to resolve over 10 years based upon disposal rather than storage on site.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the Secretary of State accept that one of the Select Committee's recommendations was that there should now be a stocktaking and assessment of the options set out in their report before a commitment is made to a specific course of action and that that is the valid criticism that can be made of the Government's present intentions, even given the fact, which I accept, that things have not moved quickly over the past 10 years?

Mr. Baker: The Select Committee also pointed out that things have not moved too quickly over the past 10 years. In recommendation 8, it said:

> "Near-surface disposal facilities are only acceptable for short-lived low-level wastes and must be fully engineered on a complete containment basis."

The advice that I have had subsequently from the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee draws attention to the difficulties that successive Governments have had in finding a solution to the problem.

In February I published a draft of the special development order that it is proposed to lay before the House shortly to enable NIREX to investigate sites for the shallow disposal of radioactive waste in clay. As a result of the comments and views expressed, the Government have made a number of detailed changes to the order—for example, in the hours of working. They have also decided to limit the wastes to be deposited to what is broadly described as low-level waste. I shall come back to that point later.

I should emphasise that the work that would be carried out under the proposed special development order will be only the first step in the development of a near-surface facility. The planning permission will only enable NIREX to investigate the geology and hydrogeology of the four sites at Bradwell, Elstow, Fulbeck and South Killingholme. It carries no presumption that any one of the sites will ultimately be developed. It will be for NIREX, as the prospective developer, to assess the information that it gets and then decide whether it wants to make a formal planning application.

NIREX has already said that it will make the data gathered available to those with an interest, so that they can, if they wish, make their own independent assessment. I have already made it clear that any planning application will be subject to a planning inquiry under an independent inspector. We are determined that at each stage there should be maximum opportunity for consultation with those who may be affected.

I accept that it has proved particularly difficult to bridge the gap between the scientists' assessments of risks and the honestly held perceptions of the communities that could be affected. I have received representations and seen personally the Members of Parliament concerned with those four sites. I know only too well the anxieties that their communities are expressing about the proposals. Having listened to their representations, particularly on the distinction between intermediate and low-level waste, I have decided, as was made clear in our response to the Select Committee, that many people will be reassured if a near-surface facility is used only for low-level waste.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): This directly affects my constituency. My right hon. Friend will appreciate that the principal issue in the debate about the disposal of nuclear waste is not so much safety, which is the matter to which he has directed his comments, as public confidence. Until such time as public confidence can be restored to this area, it is unacceptable to expect

[Mr. Richard Hickmet]

communities affected by the disposal sites to be subjected to any sort of investigation, least of all a proposal to dispose of low-level waste. Much more damage will be done to the nuclear industry if these proposals go forward before such fears are allayed.

Mr. Baker: I appreciate my hon. Friend's difficulty, but we have a duty as a society to deal responsibly with the disposal of radioactive waste. That arises and will continue to arise. As I have said, it would arise even if one were to stop nuclear generation, which I think would be the wrong policy for Britain. Over the past 10 years—I emphasise that that covers two previous Governments—we have tried to find a way to deal with nuclear waste safely. I draw to my hon. Friend's attention the point made by the Select Committee, that it is possible to engineer safe disposal shallow repositories. There is one in north France. My hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government has visited that site, and I hope to do so later in the year. The site in France is being managed in a safe way. However, I agree there is a great deal of anxiety, and that must be allayed.

Many people are not aware of the type of low-level waste that arises. Some of it is surplus equipment from laboratories and hospitals, equipment from the nuclear power plants and other industries where radioactive operations take place. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) will draw to his constituent's attention the various reports that have been made available by NIREX and the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee.

I wish to deal with the difference between intermediate and low-level waste. I hope that my hon. Friends who will be affected will recognise that the Government have made a major concession on this matter. In the light of the views expressed by the Environment Committee—which also made the point regarding what was suitable for a near-surface facility — the Government have decided that NIREX should proceed on the basis that a near-surface facility will be authorised only for the disposal of what is broadly described as low-level waste.

Mr. Norman Atkinson: May I take the Minister back to his comments about high-level waste? Is it not time that the Government, and especially the right hon. Gentleman, should have much more confidence in the advice given by nuclear engineers and scientists? Now is the time to take a decision about the fast breeder programme, which is the most effective method of minimising the programme for the disposal of radioactive waste. The decisions about the year 2000 must be taken. If that is done, we will then take the responsibility from future generations. They will be able to handle a manageable method of disposal. If the Government take a decision to go ahead with the fast breeder programme, we will be in the same position as the French.

Mr. Baker: I am not sure how widely that view will be supported on the Opposition Benches. I am glad that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman, because he has made a point which will be developed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Mr. Atkinson: Do not try to make a party political point. Take the matter seriously.

Mr. Baker: I am not trying to make a party political point. This is an important matter, and we cannot be faulted for wishing to proceed with it.

Short-lived and long-lived intermediate-level waste will, therefore, be stored, pending the identification and development of a deep disposal site or until radioactivity has reduced sufficiently for its disposal, as low-level waste. The Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, under the chairmanship of Professor Matthews, has endorsed this approach. The nuclear industry, in its interim response to the Environment Committee, published on 9 May, has made it clear that it does not see any strong technical economic or operational objections to this.

I want to assure my hon. Friends and the House that the facility will be designed and constructed to strict radiological criteria. It will have to meet strict standards of containment. Unsuitable wastes will be excluded. The proposals will also have to meet the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974 concerning the interests and the safety of workers and the public.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): My right hon. Friend is dealing with the conditions that will be imposed and the conditions which the inspector at the public inquiry will be asked to consider. Will the inspector at the public inquiry also be asked to consider the desirability of other methods of disposing of this waste?

Mr. Baker: We have decided and the Select Committee has recommended — this has received the support of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee—that it is perfectly safe to dispose of low-level waste in shallow depositories. That recommendation has caused an enormous amount of debate. The proposals that we are putting forward are designed to deal with that debate.

Intermediate-level waste will require deep disposal, either in a mineshaft or under the sea. The Swedes have an under-sea disposal site, which I hope to visit later this year and to study the nature of the wastes. The volume of low-level waste is substantial and significant. We believe that the way to proceed is for the shallow disposal of low-level wastes in clay.

I re-emphasise to my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) that safety is paramount not only in the operation of nuclear installations but in the disposal of radioactive waste. We cannot afford to be careless in any way, shape or form.

The Government remain committed to the safe development of nuclear power and the disposal of all radioactive waste. The Government have taken and will continue to take the necessary steps to achieve this objective. I invite the House to support the motion on the Order Paper.

4.55 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move, in line 1, leave out from 'House' to end and add

'believes that safety, health and environmental protection must be of paramount importance in the operation of the civil nuclear power industry; deplores the failure of Her Majesty's Government to inform effectively the British people of the nature, level and implications of the radioactive fallout caused by the Chernobyl accident; condemns the Government's failure to develop acceptable, comprehensive policies for the necessary storage and monitoring of nuclear waste; recognises the need for an urgent and comprehensive safety review of Britain's existing

nuclear power stations; believes that such a review should be published, and debated by Parliament; and consequently demands that whilst these matters remain unresolved Her Majesty's Government should not proceed with any expansion of civil nuclear power.'.

I join the Secretary of State for the Environment in expressing, on behalf of the Labour party, our sympathy and regret at the loss of life and the continued toll of injury and illness caused in the Ukraine as a result of the Chernobyl disaster. In view of what the Secretary of State had to say about Divisions, we wait with interest to see whether the Government's Chief Whip is able to shepherd all his flock into the Lobby with the Government tonight and indeed, if the Chief Whip is able to work up the courage to go into the Lobby after them.

Britain was among the first nations of the world to develop nuclear power to generate electricity. For more than 30 years, that development has proceeded, based on British research and engineering. Methods of scrutiny and public control have developed parallel to the development of the industry. The nuclear industry, from the outset publicly owned and subject to close Government supervision, now produces about 18 per cent. of our electricity. Those employed in the industry are all members of the appropriate trade unions.

The industry has been the object of much piecemeal inquiry and has suffered from regular changes of policy. There is now, and has been, a lack of any coherent strategy. There has been a specific failure to develop an acceptable national policy for the storage and monitoring of nuclear waste. The policy on discharges into the environment has also been unacceptable.

Although those responsible for managing the industry cannot escape their responsibility for failure or errors, it is, above all, the ineffective nature of a framework of Government policy which lies at the centre of the present difficulties. There has been no coherent or comprehensive review of the overall progress and impact of civil nuclear power in Britain. It is remarkable to reflect on that. It is time that we had such a review.

In the past 16 years, I have dealt with many issues on behalf of my constituents, such as health, environmental protection, safety to communities, secrecy and discharges into the environment. I have learned a great deal about the industry. But I am conscious of the fact that there is a massive job still to be done in this country if we are ever to persuade people that the industry has a sustainable future.

The level of misunderstanding between those responsible for running the industry and the public is appalling. It has been continually bedevilled by secrecy, obfuscation, the deliberate withholding of information that the public has a legitimate right to receive, and the workings of the Official Secrets Act. What shook me above all, especially in view of recent controversies, was to receive a letter a few days ago from a lady who was protesting about nuclear waste management policy. She concluded:

"After all Dr. Cunningham you wouldn't have it in your constituency would you?"

Recent events in the British nuclear industry and the appalling failure of technology at Chernobyl underline what many of us already knew: we need new political techniques to deal with technologies such as nuclear power. The experience of the past three weeks has starkly demonstrated that we also need new international agreements. The development of nuclear power has begun to outstrip public acceptance and understanding of what it involves, and without public acceptance of its operation there can be no future for the civil nuclear industry.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Have the events of the past three weeks made the hon. Gentleman change his view, as expressed in various journals last month, that in principle it is right for Britain and his party to continue with the nuclear policy participated in and developed by him when in government?

Dr. Cunningham: It is no secret that I have always believed that civil nuclear power has a legitimate role in any rational energy policy. Unlike the hon. Gentleman and some of his colleagues, I shall not pretend to be all things to all people. I have already mentioned the essential requirements of openness, frankness and explicit information on such matters. It may be argued that the British industry has an outstanding safety record. However, that alone is not enough. By its very nature, nuclear power embodies hazards that are intangible and invisible. Radiation has no smell. It makes no noise. It has no colour. It does not rattle. It frightens people, and we must recognise that from the outset.

It is essential that the safety, health and environment of our people should be safeguarded by standards of scrutiny and oversight that are set far higher than for any other industry. We live in a world where nuclear power generates 15 per cent. of all electricity used. In some countries, including our neighbour France, the figure is between 50 and 70 per cent. At the end of last year there were 374 nuclear reactors in operation in 26 countries throughout the world. During 1985, 31 new reactors were brought into production. Construction on six more was commenced. Even in America new reactors have been commissioned, and the recently published United States energy policy review envisages 30 new reactors in the United States in the next decade.

It is important for people to realise that very close to us now, much closer than Sellafield or Dounreay, the French have a massive commitment to civil nuclear power in light water stations at Flamanville, Palluel, Pentlys and Gravelines. On one site alone, at Gravelines on the other side of the Channel, the French have more generating capacity than we have in the whole of England. That is the reality, and it will not change in the short or medium term. Thus, it is futile to pretend that Britain can isolate itself, industrially, environmentally, economically or in energy policy terms, from that reality.

No major industrial nation has decided to abandon nuclear power altogether. For those reasons, we consider it essential that the British Government should use all means available to secure international application of the highest known safety standards and management systems, and that they should urgently seek a review—I believe that the Minister touched on this—of the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency and other relevant international bodies involved in the monitoring and control of civil nuclear power. We welcome the Government's commitment to such initiatives.

Britain, uniquely among major industrial nations, is for the present self-sufficient in energy resources. We already have an operating margin of almost 100 per cent. in electricity generating capacity. We thus have time to consider carefully the complex issues involved and to plan for the future. We say unequivocally in the Labour party

[Dr. Cunningham]

that the major factor involved in that planning should be an enhanced role for the British coal industry. That is why in the prevailing circumstances we see no case for proceeding with any expansion of civil nuclear power—no PWR at Sizewell or on any other site.

Today, the House is asked to approve the Government's actions in response to fallout in Britain from the Chernobyl accident in the Ukraine. We cannot do so for several reasons. Although it was clear for several days that Britain might be affected by radioactive fallout, Ministers seemed totally unprepared for it when it actually came. A single Minister, effectively briefed, with a central unit should, from the outset, have been placed in charge of the announcement of explicit and coherent information to the people. The exact nature, levels and implications of the contamination should have been published from the beginning. That simply was not done. Even after the matter was first raised from this Dispatch Box, Ministers dithered. The Government's response was wholly inadequate to deal with genuine, predictable and justifiable anxieties. The information provided and the manner of its release served only to heighten confusion and to exacerbate concern.

Why, for example, were public notices not published in newspapers, which would have been by far the most effective way of getting accurate information quickly to people? Do the Government recognise that the consequences of the Chernobyl fallout for Britain were significant, and that statements such as, "It could not happen here," were totally misleading? It was important to achieve a balance between frankness about the situation and the need to calm unnecessary fears, but here again the balance was wrong. Statements from Ministers were in conflict with statements from the director of the National Radiological Protection Board, again confusing the media as well as the public, and thus sabotaging, before it could begin, the effective dissemination of accurate information.

We saw the Government incapable of responding satisfactorily to an emergency. We believe that there is a need to review comprehensively existing procedures and contingency plans for dealing with such incidents. Nor, I must emphasise, do we support self-righteous attacks on the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union should be more open about the nature and scale of the accident, but the "holier than thou" approach of some people in the British Government — and, even worse, the attitude of the American Government — did nothing to help or to encourage the Soviet Union to be more open and forthcoming; indeed, they probably had the opposite effect.

We also have an opportunity today to debate the Government's first response to the report of the Select Committee on the Environment on radioactive waste. The report is most welcome as an authoritative statement of radioactive waste management policy in Britain. Given the wider welcome that it has received, not least from the Secretary of State for the Environment today, I suspect that the Secretary of State for Energy must bitterly regret his immediate destructive and critical comments about the report and what it had to say to the House and to the country.

The Select Committee is right to be highly critical of Government policy and the lack of a coherent research strategy for the storage of nuclear waste. In particular, I welcome the recommendations on eliminating radioactive discharges to the marine environment, on the Drigg low-level waste site, on the need for research of deep geological sites, and on an end to unnecessary secrecy in the industry—all issues that for many years people in my constituency, the local authorities, trade unions and I myself have been urging on successive Governments at Westminster. The Select Committee is right to highlight the need for a better management performance in the industry and for better public information. We accept too the proposal for an economic reappraisal of the THORP project and believe that the necessary work on such a study should be commenced immediately.

The report of the Select Committee has been widely welcomed and commended by the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, by the Central Electricity Generating Board, by British Nuclear Fuels plc and by environmental groups. The Select Committee makes clear the need to develop new policies for the storage and disposal of all nuclear waste. A decade ago the Royal Commission on environmental pollution highlighted the necessity for such policies. We accept the national need for a land-based site to take low-level radioactive waste generated in the nuclear industry, in the Health Service, in non-nuclear industry, in universities and in research establishments. The Government are right to accept the important recommendation that only low-level waste should be dealt with in that way.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The hon. Gentleman is being forthright and forthcoming about where he stands, on behalf of his party, on this important issue. My constituents need to be absolutely clear on where all political parties stand on the disposal of low level waste. May I get it critically clear? By what he has just said, does the hon. Gentleman accept, as I do not, and if he were Secretary of State for the Environment would he approve, a near-surface disposal facility, such as has been recommended by NIREX?

Dr. Cunningham: Yes is the answer to that. We have such a facility in my constituency now, as I assume the hon. Gentleman knows. The site at Drigg will not serve the country indefinitely. Anyone who believes that the problem can be ducked is not only deluding himself but is misleading his constituents. If we had no nuclear industry tomorrow, such a site would still be necessary to deal with waste from the Health Service, from research laboratories, from universities and from non-nuclear industry, as I have already made clear. Lest the hon. Gentleman is in any doubt, I have written to constituency Labour parties which have approached me on the issue, making that absolutely clear to them. The national requirement for such policies should not be ducked by anyone who has pretensions to be a serious political representative in the House.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Will the Minister give way? *[Laughter.]* Quite a few of us have been affected by last Thursday's events, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Further to the point he was making, what does the hon. Gentleman say of the morality of hon. Members who are enthusiastic about civil nuclear power but who, when it comes to their constituencies, as we have seen with at least four Conservative Members, think that the waste and the danger should be taken somewhere else?

Dr. Cunningham: It will come as no surprise to the right hon. Gentleman that I share his views about the double standards inherent in such an approach. As I recall, all Conservative Members have supported the Government in their aggressive atitude on the development of civil nuclear power in Britain — an attitude, incidentally, which is of no consequence in reality, because the Government have not ordered even one nuclear power station in their seven years in office. Like much else about the Government's policy, their actions totally belie their rhetoric. That is the reality.

We cannot accept that a special development order procedure should be used to circumvent the proper involvement and legitimate interests of local authorities and the communities they represent. The Select Committee concluded, and we agree, that publicly acceptable solutions are possible for the storage and disposal of waste in Britain, as they are in other countries. I remind the Government, however, that their own studies show that the disposal of low-level waste in a retrievable form adds little to the overall cost. That should be a feature of policy for near-surface disposal. The Select Committee makes clear the extent to which Britain lags behind Germany, Sweden, the United States of America and France in policies for radioactive waste storage and disposal. This is a serious failure of Government policy.

Little progress has been made over the last seven years. In one major respect we have gone backwards. The Government made a major error when in 1981 they abandoned a development research programme initiated by the Labour Government for the disposal of high-level waste. The Government took that decision against the advice of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee and of the industry. The advisory committee has repeated its criticism of the decision recently in letters to Ministers. The current position in Britain is a direct consequence of that failure of Government policy.

Intermediate-level waste and highly active waste, when vitrified, should be stored and monitored in deep-mined facilities specially developed for the purpose. The proposal of the Select Committee that an experimental site be developed to test proposals, but not to be used for the actual disposal, is worthy of serious consideration. The environmental aspects of Magnox fuel reprocessing are dealt with in the report. Some people argue that reprocessing should end.

We cannot deal with the different problems of environmental protection simply by deciding to close industries. Nor should Socialists accept that we can protect the environment by undermining the economic and social well-being of our communities. I have long argued that discharges from Sellafield should be eliminated. The recently announced new controls are welcome, and the much-improved performance of the industry on discharges is long overdue, but a target date for the elimination of discharges into the sea should be set by the Government.

Mr. Lyell: On lower and intermediate levels of waste such as those placed at Drigg, is the hon. Gentleman content with the broad structure of the facility at Drigg, which drains through to the sea? Does he envisage that being updated? If so, would he still have a fail-safe drainage to the sea?

Dr. Cunningham: No. I can tell the hon. and learned Gentleman that we have been anything but content with facilities at Drigg for some time. I am sure that he is aware that an announcement was made several months ago to upgrade the facility at Drigg—a decision that was long overdue. I emphasise that, even with the compacting of waste, the site at Drigg has a finite life and we cannot continue indefinitely cramming more and more waste and radioactive material into it.

I was discussing the reprocessing of Magnox fuel. About 2,000 tonnes of Magnox fuel from British programmes await reprocessing. During the next few years, about 1,000 tonnes per annum will result from Britain's Magnox stations. BNFL is contracted to deal with the material on behalf of British generating boards. Any necessary decommissioning of aging Magnox power stations will add significantly to those totals. In those circumstances, suggestions that early closure of the plant is desirable or possible are frequently misleading.

Dry storage is not a better alternative, even if it were possible. Nor would public opinion readily welcome or accept a proliferation of stores for highly radioactive, long-lived nuclear fuel elements around the country. There is now deep public concern in Britain about nuclear power, waste disposal, siting of reactors and accidents. It is unlikely that people would accept that we should further complicate the position by dispersing more and more radioactive fuel around the country. Surely even this Government have learnt that we urgently need a freedom of information Act to ensure the fullest possible and best-informed debate. Those aspects of the Official Secrets Act applying to civil nuclear power should be removed. I reiterate the Labour party's commitment to that action.

We also require the urgent completion of Magnox safety reviews and the publication of the relevant documents. We remain committed to a ban on sea dumping of radioactive waste. The Labour party supports proposals for the inclusion of local authority members, trade unionists and environmentalists on the boards of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee and NIREX.

I emphasise that we remain totally opposed to the construction of a pressurised water reactor. We are immediately committed to halting the production of weapons grade material in British civil nuclear power stations or, for that matter, in any other facility. Labour opposes the introduction of the fast reactor and emphasises the need for a full public inquiry into the proposed reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

We should ensure that the nuclear installations inspectorate is strengthened and that control of the nuclear industry and all the bodies which oversee it is examined and, where possible, rationalised.

Mr. Norman Atkinson: After reading the evidence in other reports, I, too, oppose the idea of the British development of the PWR system, but that is not to rubbish the report that we expect this autumn from Professor Bill Hall, who is one of our most reputable nuclear engineers. Professor Hall, who is the excellent engineering assessor attached to Layfield, will write the report on PWR. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has dismissed the report without seeing it. He is not only criminalising British nuclear engineers, but rubbishing the people who have put much work into PWR development. On the basis of other reports, I agree that we should not

[Mr. Norman Atkinson]

go ahead with it, but my hon. Friend should say that he has every respect for the engineering work that has been done by Professor Bill Hall.

Secondly, I am—*[Interruption.]* I am talking about Professor Bill Hall's reputation as a leading nuclear engineer. Let us not treat engineers in that way. That is the reason why we are in our present position, with trivia coming out——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Interventions must be brief. There is great pressure in this debate.

Dr. Cunningham: I have some sympathy with what my hon. Friend says, but I have not rubbished in advance the Layfield report: indeed, I have not even mentioned it. What I have said—I said it at the beginning of my speech and I repeat it now — is that, in present circumstances, we envisage no requirement to order civil nuclear power stations. I shall read the Layfield report with much interest, as will my hon. Friend.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Does that mean that the next Labour Government will order no more nuclear power stations?

Dr. Cunningham: In case there is any misunderstanding, I shall repeat what I said. We envisage no case for ordering any nuclear power stations in the prevailing circumstances—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] At the risk of lengthening my speech unnecessarily, I should deal with the mirth of members of a party which, when in government, did not order one nuclear power station for nearly 25 years. The joke is a little misplaced. In the present circumstances of energy self-sufficiency, the strength of the British coal industry and grave public uncertainty about the nuclear industry and all its operations, I cannot understand why Conservative Members should suddenly be worried about a nuclear order.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on this point?

Dr. Cunningham: I shall not give way. I am nearing the end of my speech. I have given way generously to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Single-issue campaigners can and often do ignore inconvenient complexities. We cannot do so, nor can we in modern industrial societies regard technology as unthinkable. The Labour party does not espouse the zero economic growth views of some environmentalists. We believe that improved international economic performance is a vital necessity for millions of people facing poverty, malnutrition and disease. The reality is that we must learn to deal not only with the existing technologies but with the developing momentum of new technologies, new scientific discoveries, that are coming at us literally from all over the world.

In his excellent and widely praised work "The Ascent of Man", Jacob Bronowski wrote at the conclusion something which is very apposite to the present circumstances:

"We are all afraid—for our confidence, for the future, for the world. That is the nature of human imagination. Yet every people, every civilisation, has gone forward because of its engagement with what it has set itself to do. The personal commitment of a man or a women to their children, the intellectual commitment and the emotional commitment working together as one has made the ascent of man."

In dealing with these complex and controversial issues, we should bear those words in mind.

5.30 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I recognise that, because of the widespread concern caused by the disaster in Russia, it has been necessary to widen the debate beyond a consideration of the interim response by the Government to those parts of the report on radioactive waste by the Select Committee on the Environment that are relevant to the development of near-surface facilities for the disposal of radioactive waste.

Although the amendments that were tabled in my name to protect the position of the Committee have not been accepted, I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for his assurance that the motion does not pre-empt a considered reply and discussion of those parts of the report that remain unanswered, in particular the vital questions that we have raised concerning the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuels.

In view of the large number of right hon. and hon. Members who wish to take part in the debate, I shall seek to confine my remarks to the Committee's report and the Government response. However, I cannot let this moment pass without expressing a personal deep feeling of sympathy, which I am sure is shared by Members in all parts of the House, for those individual Russian men, women and children who are directly facing the horrifying consequence of the nuclear failure at Chernobyl. It is something that we do not wish to see happen again anywhere in the world, and above all not in our country.

When harnessing the forces of nature for its own benefit, mankind has always placed itself at risk. If there is carelessness, if accidents happen, human tragedy inevitably follows. In the handling of the energies of the atom, the significance lies in the magnitude of the possible catastrophe and the lasting effects, possibly for generations. It is this thought that underlines the report of the Committee. If the greatest possible care is not taken in handling the waste products of nuclear energy, these could pollute the human environment and place succeeding generations at risk for literally thousands of years.

Our recommendations underline the need for the strictest possible classification of waste in accordance with its radioactive and toxic qualities, and the actual disposal route of all radioactive waste must then follow according to its classification. Thus, a main recommendation is that near-surface disposal facilities should be used only for low-level waste, with a half-life of 30 years or less, containing no alpha-bearing particles, and particularly no toxic radionuclides. If this classification is followed and there is the strictest monitoring and sorting of waste before disposal, the Committee sees no risk in near-surface depositories that are properly engineered for maximum containment.

This is particularly relevant to the four sites chosen by NIREX for exploratory purposes. I am delighted that the Government have accepted the Committee's recommendation that near-surface facilities should not be used for intermediate-level waste, even though the industry itself

and its scientists are of the view that short-lived intermediate-level waste is safe in properly engineered depositories.

However, as hon. Members will have heard, from the county councils of Bedfordshire, Humberside and Lincolnshire——

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): And Essex.

Sir Hugh Rossi: And Essex; I am obliged to my right hon. Friend — there will be continuing and deep local opposition to the use of any particular site for disposal purposes, and this opposition is bound to be supported by my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in those areas.

All this is perfectly understandable. In the course of its studies the Committee identified what we have chosen to call the NIMBY syndrome—the "not in my back yard" argument—which runs, "It may be necessary to put the stuff somewhere, but here is not the place to do it." I think that it will be difficult to find any locality where the inhabitants will say, "By all means dump your muck in my backyard — we recognise that it is for the national good." Altruism rarely overturns self-interest to that extent. I believe that the situation would arise whatever kind of waste was to be dumped in a locality which has not accustomed to being a depository for waste.

The natural reluctance to accept radioactive waste is latched on to by those who would prefer no nuclear energy to be produced in this country. They may be the coal interests, the oil interests or those genuinely fearful of the consequences and risks to the human environment. They will do the best that they can to encourage local opposition as part of their campaign against the use of nuclear power.

The continuance of the use of nuclear power was not the issue before the Select Committee, as energy policy lies outside its remit. We were concerned—and this was referred to by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)—by the fact that even if all nuclear power stations were ordered to cease operation forthwith there would be the neeed to decommission about 34 reactors, with all their ancillary buildings, equipment and facilities. In addition, there are substantial quantities of waste accumulated over 40 years, which still require disposal. A safe place has to be found for all this. Ultimately geology—rock and subsoil formation—must determine where this will be. The overriding consideration is the possibility of maximum containment and the absence of permeating water that can carry dangerous matter one knows not where.

Undoubtedly those communities living in geological areas suitable for radioactive waste disposal will feel aggrieved. They will be asked to accept something that they do not want or like in the national interest. It was the Committee's view that such communities should be compensated by the nation as a whole for the disadvantages that they will suffer in their environment, and possibly even in the values of their properties. Precedents exist for this in the Land Compensation Act 1973, the underlying policy of which I advocated strongly many years ago.

Under that Act, those whose houses are affected by public works, such as new motorway constructions, receive home-loss payments, grants for double glazing and some financial compensation for the loss that they have suffered. The concept is inherent in section 52 agreements under the planning Acts, which I advocated also many years ago. Under the agreements, developers make some provision for the benefit of the local community, such as providing new infrastructure, in return for planning permission. These are concepts which should be built upon and extended, espcially when we are dealing with such a publicly sensitive matter as radioactive waste.

I am a little disappointed that the Government have not been more forthcoming on the question of compensation. They have merely said that they are giving the matter serious consideration. They would stand substantially more chance of carrying public opinion with them if they were seen to be anxious to produce safe systems and to be fair and, indeed, generous to those who may be disadvantaged as a result of these operations. They might even save money in the long term, by having somewhat shorter public inquiries with fewer objectors.

Public anxiety cannot be dismissed in any circumstances, and the Government must do everything to allay it. In its report, the Select Committee was critical of some of the past attitudes of the nuclear industry. It is understandable for scientists and for professionals generally to assume that others understand what they themselves regard as everyday knowledge and with which they are working the whole time.They are assured and satisfied in their own minds that what they are doing is acceptable and safe, but they have failed to communicate that knowledge in an understandable form to the public at large in order to make them realise that perhaps humanity can benefit from the use of nuclear power and that these enormous energies can be harnessed safely. We must show that we are using systems that are absolutely safe. That must be demonstrated.

A number of questions remain unanswered. It has been said, probably with some justification, that it is not possible to put into effect the Select Committee's recommendation on the absolute exclusion of alpha-bearing waste. Nothing is said about toxic radionuclides, which we feel present as great a danger as alpha-bearing particles. There should be monitoring and exclusion if low-level waste is to be put into near-surface depositories, and it would be useful to know the Government's thoughts on the classification of such waste. Their response is silent on this issue.

The Select Committee was extremely impressed by the work that it saw in other countries in both the compaction and pyrolysis of low-level waste, which is the incineration of waste in the absence of air. Industry in Britain was non-commital when we asked it whether these methods were to be used, or should be used, in this country. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made an encouraging statement this afternoon and has said that compaction is to be used in 1987. It is vital that every means possible within our technology to reduce the volume of low-level waste is introduced so that the amount of land required for its disposal is correspondingly reduced and all the difficulties that may otherwise arise in a number of localities throughout the country can thereby be avoided.

The industry is issuing separate responses to the Select Committee's report, and these are coming in thick and fast. We have had responses from the CEGB, and UKAEA, the SSEB, BNFL and NIREX, and all appear to welcome many aspects of the report, especially our recommendation on what we call the Rolls-Royce

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

approach. The Government do not seem to have made much reference to this recommendation. Basically, it implies that every expense must be incurred and the latest technology used to produce facilities that are completely up to date—not holes in the ground, like Drigg—for the engineered containment of waste, and the public must see that this is being done. It is only in this way that reassurance can be given to the public that the Government are concerned about their safety.

The industry appears to have accepted the philosophy that containment, rather than dilute and disperse, is important. This seems to be something of a shift in its philosophy. Are the Government entirely in accord with the concept of containment, rather than that of dilute and disperse? Do they welcome it as quite a dramatic shift in emphasis as a consequence of my Committee's report?

I wish to express my thanks to the Government and the Opposition for the warm welcome that they have given to my Committee's report. I thank all outside commentators who, without exception, have regarded the report as a serious contribution to knowledge in this sector. The report marks the conclusion of about nine months' hard work. I wish to extend my thanks to all the members of my Committee. I thank them for their extremely hard work in supporting the production of a unanimous report. I thank also our specialist advisers, Dr. John Mather of the National Environment Research Council, and Mr. Walter Patterson, for their invaluable help and advice throughout. Last but not least, my thanks go to Mr. Clive Bennett and other Committee Clerks, who coped cheerfully with the burdens placed upon them and without whose help it would not have been possible to produce the report.

5.48 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): This is a wide-ranging subject and in the brief time available to me I shall concentrate on some key issues relating to the future of nuclear power in the United Kingdom. In the light of the speech of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), the chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment, I must say that I warned at the time of the publication of the report that there was likely to be what I described as a green backlash against the further development of nuclear power. The Chernobyl disaster has intensified and accelerated that reaction.

A number of concerns have been raised, to which the Government must respond during the debate, report on in future and bring back to the House. A clear concern of the Select Committee was nuclear waste disposal. Our view over a number of years has been that the nuclear industry, despite the fact that it has had substantial backing over a long period, and, on its own admission, no commercial constraints placed upon it, has not been able to come up with acceptable ways of disposing of nuclear waste. That fact in itself has been enough to justify my party's view that there should be no further expansion of the nuclear power programme while the problem remains unresolved. If the House agreed that we should not proceed with the use of nuclear power, we might find some means of making progress towards disposing of the waste that has so far been created.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): We are all most anxious to discover the policy of the alliance about the future of nuclear power, but perhaps we are not quite so anxious as my constituents because the National Nuclear Corporation, which exists only to design nuclear power stations, employs more than 1,200 people in my constituency and another 600 people close by. Furthermore, 3,000 to 4,000 people are employed by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. at Risley. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the alliance candidate in my constituency will endorse the policy that he is now espousing, or does he think that, with the usual gutless opportunism which is the hallmark of his party, she might find a way out of the difficulty?

Mr. Bruce: I am inclined to treat that intervention with the contempt that it deserves, but I appreciate that the industry is important to the people who are employed in it and that it is vital to our future. Its environmental impact is also important. We have to look at the wider issue of the principles involved. If coal miners and others can be retrained, so can scientists. They can be redirected into other areas of research—a point that I intend to deal with, if I am allowed to proceed with my speech.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruce: No.

We are opposed to Sizewell—we believe that it is unjustified—and we have consistently opposed Torness. We have reached the stage where we should begin to decomission the older Magnox stations which are reaching the end of their useful life. The point has already been made that, even if we wanted to do so, there is no possibility of stopping the nuclear industry in its tracks overnight. The problems involved in decomissioning and disposing of high-level nuclear waste would intensify our immediate problems. We cannot deal with those problems all at once; we can only start that process. It seems to the alliance that we should begin that process by saying that we should not continue to build nuclear power stations.

My second point relates to the Government's motion. In our view, it is complacent. The Government's reaction to the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster does not accord with the terms of their motion. The public have been confused, and in some cases public confidence has been damaged by the Government's utterances. People in my constituency have told me that they have no confidence in the Government's assurances. The Government could not even get the telephone number right when they announced that they were setting up a hot line. The Scottish Office had to correct a press statement about the radiation levels that had been announced. Understandably, people were concerned when they were told that they could drink milk but not rain-water. That was explained subsequently, but it was not explained at the time of the announcement.

Radiation levels may not have been dramatically above normal and they were within the safety limits. However, given our limited knowledge, people are entitled to ask what are safe limits, especially as the standards that we apply are different from those that have been applied by other countries. They are taking more stringent precautions. It is not surprising, therefore, that the public lack confidence in the Government's response to the disaster. There was ample warning of the drift of the radioactive cloud from Chernobyl, yet it appears that the Government were not adequately prepared in advance.

They were unable to inform the public about what they needed to know when the cloud from Chernobyl finally arrived.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Gentleman knows that this motion deals with the disposal of nuclear waste. He has not yet told us about the Liberal party's policy on the disposal of nuclear waste. Does he favour the disposal, in a near-surface facility, of low-level nuclear waste, to which recommendation the Liberal party's Chief Whip put his name? Did the Chief Whip vote with the authority of the Liberal party on that matter?

Mr. Bruce: My understanding is that my hon. Friend did not do so.

Mr. Hogg: Oh yes he did.

Mr. Bruce: My hon. Friend sought to amend the report to make it stronger than it is. I have already said that this country and local authorities will not make progress in dealing with this problem until there is a responsible Government who say, "We are not prepared to expand the nuclear industry until we can deal with disposal."

Mr. Hogg: Answer the question.

Mr. Bruce: The answer is no.

Mr. Hogg: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruce: No, I will not. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Bruce.

Mr. Bruce: I am speaking in this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as energy spokesman for my party, and I am stating my party's policy. My hon. Friend, the Chief Whip, is capable of speaking for himself. If he wishes to intervene, I shall gladly give way.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I should like to refer him to the amendment that I moved to paragraph 60. It was one of many amendments. If they will read the words of that amendment, my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) will realise that we asked for the deletion of the words:

"we are convinced that safe final disposal routes are available in the United Kingdom."

That amendment was supported by both Conservative and Labour Members. That amendment showed that we are opposed to the disposal of either intermediate or low-level waste on any site in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The statement by the Liberal party's Chief Whip is not accurate. The two relevant paragraphs are 74 and 99——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a matter for debate. It is not a matter for the Chair. Mr. Bruce.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should be interested to know how the Government Chief Whip manages to reconcile his position on nuclear waste with that of the Government. At least the position that we are adopting is consistent. *[Interruption.]* That is most certainly the case. Nobody in my party proposes the building of new nuclear power stations, but we all agree that provision must be made for the disposal of nuclear waste. The position that we adopt is consistent but the Government's position is dishonest. For a member of the Cabinet to adopt such a position is fundamentally unacceptable.

The public have no confidence in the Government's reaction to the drift of radiation from Chernobyl to the United Kingdom. The chaos and confusion in the Government have caused real concern.

That brings me to another point: whether Britain would be able to cope with a major radiation leak from a British nuclear installation, especially in view of the United Kingdom's population density. When he replies to the debate, will the Secretary of State for Energy tell the House whether measures are in hand to provide uncontaminated water to the population of the United Kingdom in the event of a major radiation leak? The House may be interested to know that at the weekend I was in Orkney. I was advised that there were no iodine tablets in the islands, although it is just across the Pentland firth from Dounreay. If there were an accident at Dounreay, one wonders how the islanders would be expected to react.

The Government, and others, give assurances about Britain's high safety standards and record. I do not doubt either the sincerity or the competence of our nuclear power scientists and engineers, but at the end of the day McPherson's law applies. That is, McPherson's piece always lands jeelly-side doon. That means that if something is likely to go wrong, it will. Two weeks ago the Chernobyl disaster demonstrated that the scale and character of a nuclear disaster is quite different from any other kind of disaster. If the objectives of the nuclear industry were fulfilled, we could be talking about risks of that kind from more than 80 nuclear installations in the United Kingdom.

As for the general debate on nuclear power, the proponents of nuclear power point out that it is economic and clean. Both of those factors are open to dispute. The full cost of nuclear power has not been met by the electricity industry. Much of it has been defence funded and the costs of decomissioning and waste disposal, although they have been taken into account, are likely to be much more substantial. Many of the stations that have been built have been running below capacity and have not therefore been run at full temperature.

The argument that the French have abundant cheap nuclear power is only French Government policy, not an economic fact. The capital is not being repaid; electricity in France is not viable in any proper economic sense. I understand that there is a capital debt of £20 billion, on which it is managing to pay only the interest.

We must question the cleanliness of nuclear power because of the problems of reprocessing and waste disposal. It is all very well for assurances to be given about Sellafield, Trawsfynydd, Hinkley Point and Dungeness B, and to say, as the Secretary of State did, that incidents had been a minor, not a major, threat to safety. The question in the minds of the public is that if there have been minor incidents—and there have been more than enough of them during the past 30 years—there is a risk of a major incident eventually.

It is said that nuclear power is essential because alternatives will soon run out and that they are environmentally less acceptable and politically vulnerable. On the political front, the expensive and damaging miners' strikes that have been a feature of recent Governments, especially Tory Governments, are essentially the consequence of the confrontation politics of the Labour and Tory parties when in government or in opposition. The alliance is determined to bring that to an end — *[Interruption.]* Yes, it is. In any case, the

[Mr. Bruce]

argument rather falls down because if we retain the fuel flexibility and then the power workers strike, we are in deep trouble.

The Liberal party believes that investment in energy efficiency, improvements to the environmental acceptability and the efficiency of coal and oil, coupled with the development of alternatives, could meet all our energy needs and would allow for the gradual changeover to a non-nuclear energy mix. That is attainable in the United Kingdom.

Renewable energy resources have not had the investment from which nuclear power has benefited. Indeed, Britain has just cut its wave research programme, just as the Norwegians are expanding theirs. We strongly believe that the greatest alternative energy resource—the "fifth fuel"—has the advantage of being cheap and environmentally sound. It is called conservation. A crash programme of energy efficiency over a decade could substantially reduce the need to build any new type of power station. At the same time, we could divert the funds for nuclear power into research to deal with the nuclear waste problem—which we accept must be dealt with—and into alternative renewable energy resources, such as geothermal, wind, biomass and tidal.

Because of our other resources, because of the alternatives that we can develop and because of the substantial scope for energy efficiency, this country is not under pressure and has the time to develop a viable, non-nuclear energy policy that would provide the flexibility that we need at an acceptable cost, with minimum environmental risk and maximum public acceptability. That is the course that should be followed. Any responsible British Government would pursue that course.

6.3 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): We should not have been surprised by the Chernobyl disaster. I do not mean simply that the Soviet reactor was of a design that would never have been approved in the West, but that the Soviet system itself is inherently inefficient and incapable of letting its own people, let alone its neighbours, understand what is happening. Information is the lifeblood of democracy; it can spell death to a dictatorship.

However, it would be facile to think that the Soviets are alone in maintaining an atmosphere of secrecy about technological risks or in camouflaging awkward issues. There is nothing new in secretive attitudes, even in our country. It took me 10 years to obtain a public inquiry into excessive concentrations of liquefied gas, chemicals and oil in and around my constituency. In 1974 I had to make a speech that was the longest from the Back Benches for 146 years in order to focus attention on the plight of my constituents. We got a public inquiry which came down on our side, but it took another seven years before there was a reduction in the volume of risk for the people of Canvey Island.

Our free society did not prevent the Aberfan disaster in 1966, although all those concerned with the control of that death-dealing tip, which cost the lives of 116 children and 28 adults, knew the risks, but failed to see what might happen and to take avoiding action. Our free society did not prevent the managerial stupidity in 1974 which led to the blowing up of the newest chemical plant in Europe, at Flixborough, which killed 29 workers and injured 40 others.

The truth is that even without Chernobyl our nuclear industry would have had to address itself to the question how to convince the public that its plants and procedures are inherently safe. Given the fact that the industry, both here and in the West generally, has been relatively trouble-free—for example, during the past 10 years there have been a regrettable 399 deaths in the pits, while there have been only nine in the nuclear industry, none of which was due to radiation—and given the fact that it does not compare in any way with the atmospheric pollution caused by the burning of fossil fuels or the manufacture of chemicals, the task would seem to the layman to be easy.

In other Western countries there does not appear to be anything like the fuss and bother that there is in this country. We have already been reminded in the debate that France has built 40 power stations without any clamour from its people. By last year it was producing 60 per cent. of its electricity requirements from nuclear plants, which is the highest percentage in the world. It is especially significant that the French are able to export cheap electricity and to give their own industry a billion-pound advantage over ours.

In this country there is a difference—an underlying anxiety. There is no ducking that issue. A revealing passage in paragraph 220 of the report refers to a study of a nuclear energy exhibition, on which £50,000 of public money had been spent. It states:

"the people who went into the exhibition were slightly more worried than average, but when they came out they were even more worried."

That does not appear to me to be the right sort of public relations. Why cannot the facts be presented in a way that enables a balanced judgment to be made? The report correctly states that the industry must make positive efforts to give as much information as possible to the public. In the end, however, the Committee considered that

"the industry's actions alone will convince the public, not its words. The disorder of the Sellafield site, the crudeness of Drigg, the remoteness of NIREX: these have created far more damage than any amount of facts and figures and public relations work will ever repair."

Those are harsh words, but in a democracy there cannot be a nuclear industry without public acceptance. That is really what the debate is all about, and it underlines the importance of the criticism that I must make about the extraordinary behaviour of the industry, and of NIREX in particular, over the disposal of nuclear waste, which has left the public living in the areas likely to be affected both suspicious and fearful.

Consider the business of finding repositories for what is described as intermediate—as though that was not dangerous, which is not really the case—and low-level nuclear waste. The industry's agent, NIREX, produced criteria for such disposal. It said that there must be regard to population density, to accessibility to conservation and to geology. That is excellent, and exactly what we would expect, but the site chosen at Bradwell in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip and not far from my constituency does not satisfy a single one of those criteria.

Bradwell is close to areas of rapid population growth in both north-east and south-east Essex. It is not served by a railway, and existing roads are wholly inadequate to take 128 movements a week. On the other hand, believe it or

not, it is in an area designated as an important international site of special scientific interest. For full measure, the site is in an area which is historically vulnerable to sea flooding. If that is not enough, it lies adjacent to a fault line which has seen four earthquakes since the 17th century. The epicentre of the last earthquake in 1884, which killed people, was only four miles away.

Those who selected this site for investigation did so before consulting Essex county council, which could have told them the facts. If they had come to me, I could have told them the facts. I am soaked in the history of my county. I love my county. I know about it. If they had asked anybody who knows anything about Essex, they would have been told the facts. How they could select that site for investigation, and how they will ever convince anyone that they knew what they were doing baffles me.

It is true that, since I made those revelations in the debate on 13 March, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has announced that intermediate-level nuclear waste will not be buried at Bradwell or at any of the other sites. I should think not. If NIREX had any sense, it would abandon the proposal altogether. If it is committed to following this particular path, I am in favour of a full public inquiry as soon as possible, and I predict that it will reduce confidence in the industry, not enhance it. That is the foolishness of the step that has been taken without proper consultation, reconnaissance and research.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy is present to reply to the debate, because my next point concerns him. In the debate on 13 March I complained on behalf of Essex county council and my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip that a request by the council for details of the borings carried out before the erection of the Bradwell nuclear power station, which is adjacent to the site chosen for the storage of waste, had not been met. Hon. Members will appreciate the relevance of having that information. I demanded that the details should be given. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment agreed.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman has only one minute.

Sir Bernard Braine: In April I received an undated letter from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy, who said:

"I am happy to say that CEGB have advised me that they have now sent to Essex County Council, via Nirex UK Ltd., copies of cross-sections of boreholes made for the foundations of Bradwell Power Station."

This morning that information had still not been received. That is not good enough.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the right hon. Gentleman has had his 10 minutes.

6.13 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Such large questions have been raised during the debate by right hon. and hon. Members that I hope the Government will arrange an early time when we can have a much longer, fuller debate. Obviously, a whole range of hon. Members from different sides with different points of view wish to participate.

The more one listens to the speeches from both sides, the more one realises that they underline the importance of the sentence in the Opposition's amendment which states that the House

"recognises the need for an urgent and comprehensive safety review of Britain's existing nuclear power stations."

The amendment insists that no further steps should be taken to expand the industry before that happens. That, surely, is essential. In the light of recent events it is utterly deplorable for the Government to ask the House to vote against that amendment tonight.

I speak as a long-term supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and I have always thought that it is both possible and wise to draw a distinction between nuclear production for military purposes and its production for peaceful purposes. I have always thought that that is desirable, in the paramount interest of stopping the nuclear arms race. However, some recent events, particularly the tragic event in the Soviet Union, alter the picture. From the reports of the scientific correspondent of the *Financial Times*—I think that he must be telling the truth—it appears that both military and civilian production is carried out at Chernobyl. I do not doubt that that also applies in many other places, and that should be taken into account.

When the appalling tragedy at Chernobyl first happened, there was a tendency in some quarters for some people to attribute it to the unique wickedness of the Soviet Union, rather than to the unique peril of nuclear development, which is where the world should have concentrated its attention and energies. However, as the days have passed and the information has become clearer, even the Minister in today's debate has adopted a different tone. That is an advance.

Even before Chernobyl, events were developing in such a way that the House and the country were beginning to look at the matter differently. That arose partly because Conservative Members were prepared to put their shaky seats at risk, which underlined the fact that they would not accept at face value the assurances given by Ministers and others about the absolute safety of the proposals. Indeed, we have moved rapidly since then.

Ministers and the general public often tend to misapprehend science. At one moment they treat scientific evidence almost as if it were absolutely believable, and the next as if it were absolutely unbelievable. There is a balance between the two, which we need if we are to have a sensible policy. The Government, in their rejection of some parts of the Committee's recommendations, and in many other ways, have failed to understand the deepening fears and anxieties of the public on these matters, and to reflect them in this short debate.

I was impressed, as I think many others were, by Yorkshire Television's pictures, which appeared shortly before Christmas, showing the new estimates of the danger of cancer and leukemia in areas with nuclear plants. I shall not go into the details now, as I wish to say much in a short time. Anyone who looks at the letters which I sent to the Prime Minister, and which were available for publication, although she did not choose to publish them, and at the details in *The Lancet* on 14 February, which showed that there was a greater danger in some of those areas, particularly for children aged under four, will see that the figures seem to illustrate and almost to prove that. I demanded that that matter should be part of the inquiry, and I demand that it should be part of the major inquiry for which the Opposition are calling now.

An even more alarming aspect of the whole matter has been revealed in the developments of the past few days, particularly in response to what happened in the Soviet Union. One of the most important accounts to emerge in

[Mr. Michael Foot]

the following days — it has not appeared much in the British press, and, indeed, it has not been fully published in Washington — is a report to which Senator John Glenn referred. His views should not be dismissed, as he is an authority on many of these questions. Within a few days of knowing of the disaster and the overwhelming tragedy in the Soviet Union, he ensured that a much fuller account of the report in which he and others were engaged should be made public to the world.

That report showed that nuclear power plants in 14 countries had experienced 151 significant nuclear safety incidents since 1971.

"What this means,"

said another Senator in the Committee,

"is that accidents are occurring out there but that these countries have been lucky so far, just like the Russians were lucky until now and like we've been lucky."

Britain has also been lucky, but the luck broke for one of the great powers engaged in nuclear production.

The report went on to describe what will develop if no proper international control is exerted. It said that 306

"nuclear power plants are operating in the world with a total of 3,100 reactor-years of experience.

Another 224 reactors are under construction or on order. While the rate of new construction has slowed in much of the industrial world, it is rising in the less-developed countries."

Can we not understand what the perils are for the world as a whole if that plan proceeds? The way in which the radiation has crossed frontiers in the past two weeks should impress upon us how much danger there is.

Much of the dissemination of this knowledge is taking place in defiance of treaties that have already been agreed, according to Senator Glenn, who has every right to be respected on such matters. He correctly claims that the Reagan Administration

"had not abided by a provision of the nuclear non-proliferation pact of 1978 that requires the Government to work closely with countries that buy US-made reactors to ensure safety."

Along with the measures in the Opposition's amendment there must be far greater exertion on the international front than the Government have shown any understanding of, or any willingness to undertake. It is extremely difficult for a Government who have not shown the slightest interest in a comprehensive test ban or in taking international measures in any other sectors to try to control the dissemination of such knowledge, to turn round and say that we must now embark on a full international programme. However, nothing but that can save the world in these circumstances.

In the history of mankind there has never been such a display of cosmic arrogance as these super-powers have displayed — often, I am sad to say, with the eager compliance of Her Majesty's Government and Ministers, who show no understanding of this matter. The other countries which are under threat from such nuclear production have a right to be heard, and it is high time that our Government responded to what they are saying.

6.23 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Following the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), I take up his theme about public opinion. He is right to say that at the moment there is no public confidence in the state of the nuclear industry. I came to this issue nearly a year ago when my constituency was first threatened, through a rumour which, in spite of denials and counter-denials, turned out to be true. I recognise that it is incumbent on any hon. Member who takes the stance that I have taken on this issue to accept that, if the proposal to dispose of low-level nuclear waste in a near-surface facility is unacceptable for his constituency, by definition it follows, if he is to accept the injunction from the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment, that he also acknowledges that it is not an appropriate facility in any other constituency. I fully accept that I have to address that responsibility.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was frank when I asked where his party stands on this issue. My constituents are listening closely to the debate, which I suspect will be relayed later this afternoon and tomorrow through the air waves. I must address my attention to the question of what to do with the nuclear waste and to the future of nuclear power.

I am not in a position to pass a vote of confidence or no confidence in the nuclear power industry or its expansion. However, I know that we cannot pursue a nuclear policy without consent. Plainly, there is no consent for the expansion of the nuclear industry. If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy does not believe that, I invite him to come to my constituency and share a platform with me. He will find, wherever I go and whatever the political opinion of those whom I am addressing, that there is no consent for an expansion of the nuclear power industry. It is plainly wrong, until there has been a national debate or an opportunity for pause and reflection and until the Government are able to take public opinion with them and reassure it, to go ahead with expansion. I accept that my stance towards the Government's nuclear policy requires me to deal truthfully and openly with the House and my constituents.

I deal, first, with nuclear waste disposal. I acknowledge that nuclear waste is produced, and will continue to be produced, from nuclear power, whatever policy this or any other Government may take. I am assisted in addressing the problem of what to do with nuclear waste by the report of the Select Committee on the Environment, which posed alternatives. It took evidence from organisations, which suggested alternatives, such as the method proposed by ENSEC Ltd for intermediate radioactive waste disposal and the pipeline operated waste energy disposal method. The Select Committee's report was scathing about the Government's scant regard to those alternatives.

The Select Committee, in paragraph 99, states:

"Considerably greater emphasis must be given in research, development and policy to sea-bed options, especially to the use of tunnels under the sea-bed from land."

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has disposed of the question of intermediate-level waste for these four facilities. I am grateful to him for that, but if he thought that he could buy my support and that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) or of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell), he is mistaken. All that has happened is that they, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), and my hon. Friends the Members for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who have been marvellous in the support that they have given to me in this campaign, have felt their attitudes harden. We and the general public whom we represent

recognise that, having won a victory and made the case on political grounds against the scientists about intermediate-level waste, we need not stop at that. Why should the politicians who represent those areas not also succeed on political grounds against a shallow burial facility for low-level waste?

My constituency — I am sure that I speak for the other three constituencies involved — is not in the business of dividing and ruling and putting the burden on somebody else. I would not want to put any hon. Member through what I have had to contend with during the past year. The Government must recognise that there is no public consent for the disposal of nuclear waste on land in a shallow burial facility. The sooner they face that reality, the sooner they will be able to buy public confidence in their nuclear policy. I must confess that even I did not fully recognise—although I had a good idea—how much the feelings of my constituents, whatever their political party, had matured following the announcement of the proposed nuclear waste site. The Government, whom I support, ignore that lack of public confidence at their peril.

Many hon. Members, except those who have had to address this subject—for example, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) who represents people working in the nuclear industry and those hon. Members who face the threat of nuclear waste disposal in their constituencies—are not sufficiently aware of the depth and strength of public feeling. Until the public's feelings are acknowledged, the Government will not succeed in purchasing public confidence, even if they try to do so via compensation. We need public consent.

I reiterate the commitment that I made on 21 February this year—it is in the *Offical Report* and is immutable—that, so long as I am the Member of Parliament for Brigg and Cleethorpes, I shall resist totally the idea of disposing of nuclear waste of any kind in my constituency.

6.31 pm

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham): Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), I am passionately opposed to the existence of nuclear weapons, but I equally passionately support the idea of nuclear power. I am anti-nuclear weapons and pro-nuclear power. As a Socialist, I believe that there are profound, powerful social arguments in support of the development of nuclear power.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent should relate the fears that he has rightly expressed to his beloved India, of which he is a dear friend. India cannot survive the future in the absence of nuclear power. People talk about massive catastrophes in engineering development. Has my right hon. Friend forgotten what happened in 1979, when 15,000 Indians were killed when a dam burst in Gujarat? Most British newspapers did not mention that calamity. The Socialist alternative for Indians is not to build dams of that sort, but to build an industry which they can understand and can harness to meet their needs and achieve development. As a Socialist, I remind the House that a Socialist advance will occur only in times of affluence, not in times of poverty. The emergence of a Socialist society in Britain will come from affluence, not from poverty. We cannot have affluence in Britain in the absence of a nuclear power industry.

Imaginative ideas on what will happen in the next 20, 30 or 40 years have been pitched in to support the development of the nuclear power industry. Lord Marshall, once the head of our nuclear industry, may have gone, but I say in his absence that the most important quality of genius is humility. He should not forget that, because the nuclear power industry's attitude to society generally has become arrogant. Aggressive conceit is a weakness of leadership, and Lord Marshall should remember that.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent referred to 150 significant incidents. We have all become obsessed with price comparisons. That is the very weakness of the industry. People involved in the nuclear industry work under great pressure to design safe reactors within cost constraints. Practically every one of those 150 significant incidents has been reported. The reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency — including the report on Three Mile Island—bear out the fact that the problem lies with the quality of mechanical engineering. None of those incidents has been the result of a nuclear failure or a lack of nuclear understanding. They have all resulted from inadequate mechanical engineering or inadequate metallurgy. I have no doubt that Chernobyl will prove to be the result of inadequate mechanical engineering or inadequate metallurgy.

We should be designing reactors according to a belt-and-braces philosophy. What is good enough for Rolls-Royce is good enough for the nuclear industry. Rolls-Royce provides dual brake systems and dual injection pumps and, indeed, most reactors are designed with two of everything. However, further precautions are needed to ensure engineering quality. Nuclear engineers talk about the loss of coolants and so on, as being responsible for weaknesses in their plants. We should ensure, for example, that both the valves and the pumps used in nuclear plants are of much better quality. Superb pumps are included in the PWR equipment of nuclear submarines —those damnable things under the sea's surface which the House should decide today to abolish — and we should recognise the beauty and the quality of their design and use them as a basis for civil construction.

Let me give another example. Britain or any other country can make concrete that will last a thousand years. If such concrete was used with stainless steel, there should be no seepage from tanks for a thousand years. I would sack the engineers who designed and constructed concrete containers that leaked. Those responsible for the concrete structures that have leaked at Sellafield, and so on, should be sacked for that sort of nonsense. There is no call to cut corners and save money in that way.

One point stands out clearly—Britain cannot have its nuclear engineering on the cheap. We should not expect or demand that. There should be ministerial directives to designers to adopt a much safer attitude, so that the simple design problems in reactors do not occur.

The Labour party is in danger of becoming an anti-science party, and we must be careful about that. We must be careful also about what we say today. Last year the Labour party's annual conference decided that the Labour party would be anti-nuclear, but the debate was confused and mixed up. It was an emotive debate; reference was made to bombs, environmentalism and the miners' strike. If it had not taken place during the miners' strike, many of the remarks that were made about the nuclear industry generally would never have been made.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): What about the high-level waste?

Mr. Atkinson: Waste is another aspect. Instead of just demanding the safe containment of high-level waste we should deal with waste in the proper way by initiating the fast reactor programme.

I intervened earlier to talk about fast reactors, because this is the most effective way of dealing with high-level nuclear waste products. We would not have our current problems if we had pursued a policy of that sort. Some environmentalists say that they even prefer acid rain to the nuclear industry. What sort of illogical nonsense is that? Surely we should design a society which does not call upon men to go down into the bowels of the earth to dig coal and be murdered by the demands of our society. We should devote ourselves to designing safer industry in which people can work without those dangers.

The Labour party must stop itself lurching from one emotional spasm to another. It must prevent itself taking an anti-science and anti-technology attitude. The Conservative party has already shown itself to be anti-manufacturing, because it pays not only lip service but total service to the needs of the City. As a result, it has become pro-money and anti-manufacturing. It has decided, probably quite rightly, that it is possible for it to make money but not possible for it to make anything else. That is what it has said, and if that is Conservative philosophy we must not go to the opposite extreme. We, in fact, must do everything to avoid it.

The tragedy is that unfortunately the debate so far has not been about nuclear engineering or nuclear science, but about all those other things. The great danger is not some China syndrome—it is the syndrome of propaganda. That is what we must avoid. We must talk about the essential needs of our country and the rest of the world. We must move towards a manageable nuclear industry which can solve many of our problems, especially those suffered by the Third world.

6.41 pm

Sir John Osborn (Sheffield, Hallam): I intervene in the debate because I know that hydro-electricity and nuclear-powered electricity in other countries have given, for instance, electric steel melting and cheaper electricity than is available from coal-fired power stations. In Sheffield that is one of the causes of a high level of unemployment and destruction of an industry. I also intervene because a nuclear accident in one country now concerns the whole world.

I support the Government's motion, which deals with information on the accident at Chernobyl, safety of the complete nuclear cycle and, of course, the proposals to deal with radioactive waste. I agree with various aspects of the Opposition motion, such as safety, health and environmental protection. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment covered that.

I agree with the need for a safety review of Britain's nuclear power stations, but what about power stations elsewhere in the world? The House must look outside Britain. I would also support some aspects of the alliance motion dealing with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Layfield report.

Two weeks ago I learnt of the accident at Chernobyl, because I had flown into London without reading a newspaper, at the Institute of Energy lunch. Many leaders of the atomic energy industry were there, including my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. I feared then that the sort of accident I had feared for some 35 years had taken place. The past two weeks have proved that. Of course public opinion has lost confidence in the nuclear energy industry, according to the opinion polls. There has been no shortage of comment from the media. There has been criticism by the greens and by the alliance, judging by the contribution of the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). It means that those who believe that a safe nuclear programme has a role to play must put their case as well.

In a few months I may find myself in a debate at a university dealing with the motion "That this house has no confidence in the nuclear energy industry." I shall be hard put to win that motion.

I came across a paper written by Walter Marshall, delivered to the International Atomic Energy Agency, on big nuclear accidents. That paper dealt with the effect of such accidents on hundreds of thousands of people. I believe that is what will happen in the Ukraine. Therefore, my sympathy goes out to those people. Walter Marshall pointed out that when a jumbo jet crashes we expect 300 to 400 deaths. If it were to crash on a crowded city, the death toll would be much higher. When we read an announcement, such as "Earthquake kills 10,000," we know that that means 10,000 people were killed instantly. An announcement, such as "Cigarette smoking killed 50,000 in 1981," would mean that the deaths occurred gradually over the year. However, if we read about a reactor accident killing 104,000, as referred to in a German report on risk, we must bear in mind that the majority of these people will suffer from leukaemia or cancer in 10, 20, 30 or 40 years' time and there will be a diminution in their lifespan. There has been experience of that in other fearful accidents.

Risks and the cost of safety are important and have to be balanced. The Soviet Union is a closed society, and it has been all the greater during this incident. I welcome the fact that nuclear scientists, especially from the International Atomic Energy Agency, have seen the disaster. Towards the end of this month the British branch of the Inter-Parliamentary Union will be going to Moscow, led by Lord Whitelaw and the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). It will include two hon. Members who have knowledge of the subject, my hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) and for Hastings and Rye (Mr Warren). I hope that they will go with sympathy and understanding to a nation which has had to face an accident of such immensity.

The Economic Community may not have reached an agreement on the banning of food and vegetables from eastern European countries, but what will the people of the Ukraine eat now? Do they not have a need for fresh milk, fresh food and vegetables, and can they be obtained from the Soviet Union? Can the rest of the world help? I believe that the mission should go with a message of sympathy and understanding. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy was recently invited to the Soviet Union. Surely he has been in touch with his opposite numbers in the last two weeks.

Because of time, I shall cut out my observations on the accident. That will have to be debated on another occasion. About 18 months ago I had drawn to my attention a book by Helen Caldicott called "Nuclear Madness". I read that book with interest because I would have found many of the statements hard to refute. Since then, I have read some of the literary criticisms of that book, making the point: how safe is safe enough?

It is interesting that costs, availability of competitive sources of energy — mainly cheap coal — and the complexity of financing the utilities means that no or few new nuclear power stations are likely to start construction in the United States until the turn of the century. Key decisions will have to be made in that country, as there will be a growing need for electrical energy.

Ten years ago, when I was a member of the European Parliament, I went to Ispra. We were all concerned with emergency core cooling. About 30 years ago I was involved in the supply and design of boron steel reactor control rods. I think that I gave this story in the House, but I could not find my record of it. I visited one of the small prototype reactors in Harwell. I discussed with the operator of what, by today's standards, would be a simple control desk the circumstances in which the rods would be used. He told me that if the level of radiation and temperature went up, he moved a switch over and the temperature and radiation would go down. I was not allowed to pursue with the operator what he would do if the temperature and radiation did not drop. That was the problem at Three Mile Island to a certain extent, and it was certainly the problem at Chernobyl. Therefore, knowledge, education and training are all important aspects of nuclear safety.

I have concentrated on the weakness of an industry that I support. Some 35 years ago I was a supplier to de Havilland at the time of the first Comet disaster. I had no doubt that the jet airliner, as has been the case, would replace the prop and turboprop in time. I have no doubt that there is a role for nuclear energy in the generation of electricity in the years to come. Nuclear energy is a feature of modern society now. France has 43 commercial reactors producing 65 per cent. of its electricity supply. Belgium's reactors produce 60 per cent., Sweden's produce 43 per cent., and Switzerland's produce 40 per cent. In Britain, we are approaching 20 per cent., with 38 commercial reactors.

I said that I was concerned about the high cost of electricity in Sheffield. If Britain's competitors using nuclear and hydro power have advantages, that is of concern to industry. The point has been raised by the chemical industry and put to the National Economic Development Office, that the high cost of electricity has made the industry and smelting uncompetitive and has decimated hopes for competitive electric steel melting in a city such as Sheffield.

There are risks in other areas. No one has talked about acid rain and sulphur dioxide. The cost of a retro refit in the British coal-fired power station programme could be high. This morning, at the Natural Environmental Research Council, I discussed the CO_2 content of the atmosphere, which has gone up by 40 per cent. since the start of the industrial revolution. It could double by the middle of the next century. I have discussed with the council the effect that it could have on our climate, changing the world's meteorological patterns and, above all, melting the ice caps, which could raise the sea level by 30 m, as reported in the council's annual report. Therefore, other solutions present problems, too. Risk in all those areas must be reviewed.

The debate is about nuclear waste disposal, too. About 18 months ago the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) took part with me in a public hearing in Sweden, organised by the Council of Europe, on nuclear waste disposal. The hon. Gentleman produced an excellent report — as rapporteur — which illustrated that every Council of Europe country has similar problems, too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman has had his 10 minutes.

6.52 pm

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) said that he would not under any circumstances accept nuclear waste in his constituency. He also faced up to the fact that it was unlikely that any other hon. Member would. Unfortunately, he did not go to the length of saying, as he took that attitude, that he would be opposed to any further extension of nuclear power. I would not accept nuclear waste in my constituency, but I am opposed to the use of nuclear power.

I agree that the action of the Russians in hiding the scope of the Chernobyl disaster in the early days was reprehensible. There was a good deal of Russian-bashing for the sake of it, although it is interesting that, after a couple of days, even from America there was an attempt to play it all down because the Americans had cottoned on to the fact that if they went too far in thumping the accident and the dangerous results that could follow, it would rebound on the nuclear industry all round the world.

Comfortable and self-satisfied statements were made in the House that the standards in the Russian nuclear power station would not be acceptable in the United Kingdom. That may be so. I was surprised at what the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson) said. He terrified me more than ever by his description of present nuclear power stations in this country. I had accepted in good faith that, although they could not be 100 per cent. proof against an accident, they had not been designed by Heath Robinson. However, it appeared from the hon. Gentleman's comments that they had been slapped together by somebody who did not know much about it.

The point is that those power stations are human artefacts. No matter how good the material and careful the design, one cannot guard against human error and metal fatigue. There is a story that, although the gauges at the Russian power station at Chernobyl had been showing that there was a malfunction, the man on duty was asleep. That story has not been confirmed, but it shows what can happen. All the warnings could be activated, yet the human being concerned might be otherwise occupied or fail to take account of them.

People have said, or implied, that such an accident cannot happen here. When they say that, there are echoes from 1912, when people were assured that the Titanic was unsinkable. It could happen here, wherever there is such an atomic plant.

It is not true that British standards are the highest in the world. I am used to hon. Members saying that our police force is the finest in the world, our Civil Service is the finest in the world, and our system of justice is the finest in the world. Those claims may be true, but those who say that do not know it any more than I do, because they have never made a comparative study of all the other systems. Such people fall into line and say that the British have safety standards that the Russians would never dream of, but it now turns out that the West Germans and the USA have more stringent safeguards than we have.

One of the standard defences of the nuclear power industry and its apologists is that more deaths have

[Mr. Donald Stewart]

occurred in the mining industry. That is both factually correct and totally misleading. If men are killed in a mining accident, it is a tragedy for the individuals and their families. People are sympathetic and sorry that such accidents occur, but they do not affect anyone else. It is different when there is an accident in a nuclear power plant. Would anyone equate the six deaths at Chernobyl with six deaths in a mining accident? Of course not.

The number of power plants in France was mentioned by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Sir J. Osborn). It is right that there is nothing much we can do about that. France may have no alternative, but that is not so in the United Kingdom, certainly not in Scotland. We still have plenty of fossil fuels. The amounts spent by the Government on alternative sources of energy has been derisory.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

People say: what about all the jobs in the nuclear power industry? I can tell them that 2,000 jobs have been created in Denmark in research and development on, and the manufacture of, wind power systems. Therefore, one cannot say that if the nuclear industry goes, all those jobs are lost.

In Scotland, there is now an inquiry at Dounreay. As that hearing is under way, I shall not say anything about it, although a sub judice rule does not operate. I say only this. If a country that calls itself "Great" Britain is going to look for an income from laundering dirty radioactive waste from Japan and other countries, what a prospect that is for the future.

Torness is due to go ahead, with indecent haste. The Government say that we need the power for industry. The Government, who have removed industry, are saying that. If we do not need power for industry in Scotland, it is as a result of their actions. There is less need than ever. If Torness comes on stream, we shall be 100 per cent. in excess of our needs. Why must it continue?

I should like to conclude by quoting *The Times* in 1980. Sir Kelvin Spencer, who was chief scientist at the Ministry of Power in the 1950s and who helped to launch Britain's nuclear power programme, was reported as saying that

"increased knowledge of the dangers had forced him to change his mind over the issue. The hazards were too terrifying".

Sir Kelvin's message, which I repeat, was:

"Drop it. Mankind cannot handle it".

6.59 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): In the 10 minutes that are permitted to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that you will forgive me if I confine myself to one aspect of the debate. I wish to consider what we can do with the by-products of the nuclear age.

In late February this year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced that Fulbeck in my constituency was to be one of the four designated sites where explorations were to be carried out for nuclear waste disposal. Since that time, opposition to the proposals by NIREX has been total and absolute. I want to make it utterly clear that my constituents and I are, remain and will be wholly opposed to any suggestion that nuclear waste of any kind or quality should be brought into my constituency. My main, prime, overriding and paramount objective is to persuade the Government to change their policy.

I urge the Government to make it a matter of policy that all nuclear waste should be put into some deep facility. Everything that I have to say now, that I have said in the past and that I will say in future, must be set against that main policy objective. We do not want any quality of nuclear waste in Fulbeck. We do not believe that shallow repositories should be used for the disposal of nuclear waste.

Before I expand on my general theme, I should like to consider the Government's response. In addition to our general opposition to the NIREX proposals, we have been seeking specific changes. It would be churlish not to acknowledge that the Government have moved their policy in some part. The most important concession that the Government have made is that the only nuclear waste for disposal in near-surface facilities will be of a low-level quality. That is an important concession. However, I want to make it plain that that concession is not sufficient. It will not defuse local opposition. We will build on the concessions that we have obtained; we will not rest on those concessions.

I should like to note three points about concessions. First, NIREX has introduced a limited compensation scheme for compensating property owners. That is not enough. We want more and we do not regard what NIREX has done as anything like sufficient.

Secondly, if there should be a public inquiry, we believe that public authorities, the Government or NIREX should fund the objectors who are obliged to state their arguments at the public inquiry.

Finally, and perhaps most important, we believe that very stringent conditions must be imposed, not merely on the classification of nuclear waste, but on its packaging, identification and monitoring. I trust that the Government response to those points will not be silence. I should very much regret such a response.

In a sense, these are secondary issues. I should like to return to my main objective. I want to persuade the House and the Government to change their policy on these matters. I recognise that that will be difficult. In a clear and unequivocal statement made by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), the Labour party has revealed that it is committed to supporting the disposal of nuclear waste in near-surface facilities. I intervened in the speech made by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), the Liberal party spokesman on energy. There would appear to be some discord on these matters between the Liberal party Chief Whip, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and his hon. Friend the Liberal party energy spokesman.

I should now like to consider persuasion. We must recognise that there are other methods of disposing of nuclear waste. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) listed these in detail. Dr. Wheeler and ENSEC have described the oil-related technologies. The Germans advocate the deep-mined approach and the Swedish Government are following the "tunnel under the sea" policy. These technologies exist for all classes of nuclear waste, both intermediate and low-level.

These methods are not simply theoretical. A common theme applies to all methods of disposal—one method must be adopted for the disposal of intermediate-level

waste. It is absolutely clear that intermediate-level nuclear waste must be put into a deep facility. We are pressing for an enlargement of that concept and a recognition that all qualities of nuclear waste should go into one facility and not into two.

Arguments of cost, volume and urgency are made against that proposal. On analysis, these arguments do not stand up. Where does the urgency exist? The Select Committee report made it clear that, by pursuing policies of incineration, compaction and proper discretion, the site at Drigg could be extended for some time. The same argument applies to volume. The argument for cost does not stand up, because we are considering marginal cost. The Government are committed to two sites. I believe that there should be one site. The marginal costs are small and, in any event, is that cost not a price that we will have to pay?

I would ask the House to consider two matters. Can any hon. Member guarantee that the disposal site will be safe? Of course, it will probably be safe. The solid material will be inside steel drums and placed in engineered containers surrounded by clay. Yes, it will probably be safe, but who will guarantee that it will be safe? What would happen if the steel failed or if there were problems with the clay? What if there were some mishap in the handling or transport of the waste? What if there were a combination of all these things? If these things happened, who would dare say that additional expenditure was not necessary?

Never before has the nuclear industry been as vulnerable as it is today. It would take very little to turn the public wholly against the nuclear industry. It is against that background that I ask for a change of policy. I want all quality of nuclear waste to be put into a deep facility.

Perhaps hon. Members would care to bear in mind this final point. I am not asking of hon. Members anything that they would not ask of me if our positions were reversed.

7.8 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): We have heard several expressions of sympathy for the Soviet peoples tonight, and I associate myself with such comments. However, I remind the House that when we make reference to Chernobyl, we do not make reference to a Russian problem. In fact, we make reference to a global problem. We cannot afford to be parochial about these matters.

As we discuss these matters, the House should bear in mind that, when the Secretary of State for the Environment talks about trivial accidents within the British industry, he seems to be implying that, because these accidents are minor, they carry low risk. Nothing could be further from the truth. One is not synonymous with the other.

I could discuss many aspects of these issues, but in the short time available I must confine myself to information and regulation.

We have been told that the information given as a result of Chernobyl was full, frank, open and free. In fact, the full information that it is claimed was given came in a report based on a scant sampling in minuscule, almost illegible handwriting.

I would dispute that the information was frank. We were told that a similar design to the Chernobyl reactor was rejected in Britain on safety grounds. That, quite honestly, is less than honest. The design that was rejected in Britain was rejected on the grounds of lack of efficiency and economy. To suggest anything else would be untrue.

The comparison with jumbo jet accidents and the incidence of hazards from smoking is, once again, misleading. Those accidents and smoking hazards strike only at the existing generation. When we discuss radioactive elements we discuss issues that strike at subsequent generations. They strike at creation itself. They have the propensity to turn back the very clock of creation and evolution.

Let me give two quotations to show how open has been the information that we have been given. First:

> "It would have been a precaution to have kept children inside on Saturday when it rained . . . But that is in retrospect. Try not to put that statement out because people could be frightened by it."

That was a statement by the National Radiological Protection Board to a member of the media and can be substantiated.

Secondly:

> "We don't have the policy of divulging area breakdowns of the radiation figures for milk . . . The tendency would be for members of the public to buy their milk from areas with a less radioactive level and that would be no good for the milk suppliers."

That is a quote from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the same member of the media. In other words, what it is really saying is that profits matter, people do not.

At the time that the Government were criticising the Soviet Government for their inability to release information relating to the possible exposure of British subjects to radiation, they were refusing information about the possibility of British subjects consuming the same damned stuff in irradiated food.

When we talked about the kind of things that govern regulations, let us remember that it is already acknowledged that those regulations are based upon data which are already flawed, so much so that we have had to return to the database supplied by Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to examine it with the more sophisticated and recent developments in data analysis.

We are told that our standards equate to international standards. That is another misleading piece of information. The legally enforceable limit in Britain for the ordinary member of the public is 5 mSv per year. The international standards of acceptability—not safety, note—is 1 mSv per year. In Western Germany it is 0·3 mSv per year. In the United States it is 0·25 mSv per year.

If one concentrates on those figures and develops them, they mean that the Americans are 20 times safer than we are, the West Germans are 17 times safer and anywhere else in the world which accepts international standards is five times safer.

Mr. Peter Walker *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Cook: The right hon. Gentleman may take issue with me—please do. I suggest that all the information has been, to some degree, deceiving. If the right hon. Gentleman wants to dispel the deception, he should answer my questions.

Derived emergency reference levels, as published by the NRPB, are based on a dose limit to the public of 5 mSv a year, as I have said. Is there not now a case for limiting supplies of food on the basis of the new limit of 1 mSv per year, even though this is only an average dose limit?

[Mr. Cook]

Could the Government explain definitively why derived emergency reference levels differ, for example, for iodine-131 in milk, by as much as a factor of four in the countries of western Europe?

What are the levels of actinides and strontium-90 in the environment and food at the present time as a result of the Russian reactor incident?

When will the Government make available to the public in a simple form the implications for holidaymakers, and indeed delegations of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, of the levels of radioactivity in other countries that they may visit?

Finally, does the Secretary of State agree that one organisation—I hope that he is listening—similar to the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States, should both collate and disseminate monitoring data to the British public, this one organisation to have both governmental and independent representation and to provide information in a simple, understandable manner on risk to the public from all sources, not just from radiation?

Will the Secretary of State try to answer those questions as a means of, to some extent, dispelling my suspicions of previous deception?

7.15 pm

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): I think the House knows that Elstow in my constituency has had hanging over it for two and a half years longer than anybody else the worry of a repository for short and intermediate-level nuclear waste. I welcome the Government's decision to remove the intermediate-level waste from that threat. Nevertheless, I make no apology for saying that I do not believe that any inland site in a crowded county is the right place to put any sort of nuclear waste of this nature.

It is worth remembering that no country in Europe is proposing to solve the problems, which we all recognise must be tackled and solved, in that way. Centre de la Manche in northern France is the only broadly similar example, but that does not rely on the concept of total containment alone. It has fail-safe drainage to the sea. The concept of total containment is really not credible to anybody who believes in Murphy's law. There must be a risk that sooner or later on a 300-acre site, which, by definition, will become waterlogged, drums may rupture, concrete may fail and water-bearing radionuclides may leach away into the aquifers and thereby find a pathway to man. We and the industry hope that that will not happen, but it is hard to persuade the public. I sympathise with and support what my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) said in that respect.

In Bedfordshire we oppose the NIREX proposals constructively. I think that the vast majority of us support the nuclear industry and realise that there must be a solution. I have had the problem for two and a half years, and I have studied it closely. I believe that there are solutions. My request to the Government in this debate is to look again closely at three things.

I ask them to look at the quantities of low-level waste that have to be dealt with, to look at the methods which are available for its disposal, and to look with a jaundiced eye at the comparative cost. Remember that we have to solve the problem of intermediate-level nuclear waste which the Government and the Select Committee have made clear is bound to be dealt with by some sort of deep-mine facility.

The quantities of low-level waste are, to my astonishment, much lower than any of us had realised. If one looks carefully at the best practical environmental options that have been produced for the Government, and at the Government response to the Select Committee's report, one finds that they are proposing to put into Drigg between 350,000 and 1·2 million cu m of waste, depending on how much it is compacted. All the low-level waste that they are proposing to put in elsewhere amounts to 191,000 cu m, which will cut down at least to a third —about 63,000 cu m—and may well be cut down much more. At the moment that low-level waste is not properly monitored because it was not considered worth while when compared with the cheap cost of putting it into Drigg.

When one considers the higher costs, and monitors the waste carefully, vast quantities can be excluded which could perfectly well go on a council tip. One would be able to burn or compact the gloves and coats, and one would be able to treat a great deal of the remainder. Even if one was left with 63,000 cu m of low-level waste, which is the maximum, that is a third of the 200,000 cu m of intermediate low-level waste which the best practical environmental options study said would have to be put into a deep-mined site.

The costs which the Government put forward for Drigg were a mere £25 per cu m. The waste was merely dumped, as in any other council tip. A similar site was proposed for Bedfordshire. NIREX has now said that a site at Bedfordshire, Fulbeck or anywhere else, would be a fully engineered site. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), the Chairman of the Select Committee, said that there must be a fully engineered Rolls-Royce solution. The cost of such a site, according to the BPEO document, was £615 per cu m. I do not know whether that is broadly accepted by the Government. The mininum costs for a mere concrete shell would be £125 per cu m.

We must consider the alternative of the deep disposal solution and consider the proven technologies of the oil and gas industries in the North sea. Dr. Wheeler has referred us to such technology. Westinghouse has been doing similar work and the suggested costing is £400 per cu m. That is less than the cost of the Rolls-Royce solution for a near-surface, or shallow, land burial site. That cost is likely to come down as a result of the economies of scale that would follow. The residual 60,000 cu m of low-level waste would be added to the 200,000 cu m of intermediate-level waste.

I recognise that my figures ignore, as indeed the answer to my parliamentary questions ignored, the extra low-level waste that could come from the decommissioned Magnox reactors. The timing of such decommissioning is doubtful. It is doubtful whether we should shift the low-level radioactive material when the high-level radioactive cores are left on the site.

I ask my right hon. Friends to invite NIREX and their Departments to study the matter again and to consider the quantities that will be dealt with. My right hon. Friends should insist, as the public rightly insists, that everything that is to go either into a repository or into a council tip —much of the waste could go to a tip, as it is perfectly harmless — is properly monitored before being moved anywhere. That would greatly enhance public confidence.

When one discovers that the quantities involved are low, on may find a deep-mined or sub-sea manifold solution looks much more attractive.

There are powerful reasons why an inland site at Elstow is wholly unsuitable. I could mention that the depth of the clay is probably insufficient, or that the clay is an important mineral reserve for the brick-making industry, which is one of the principal local employers. I have put forward carefully thought out reasons why there is a much more acceptable solution to these problems. I hope that my right hon. Friends will say that they will go away and consider them carefully.

7.23 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I should like to express sympathy for the terrible tragedy that the Soviet people have suffered, in terms not only of the immediate loss of life but of the loss of life that may come later and of the contamination of their crops. I am aware that it is not the responsibiiity of the Secretary of State for Energy, but if it were possible to make a gift of food, which is at present held by the Common Market, that would assist the Soviet Union at this time. I believe that would be much appreciated and would contribute to better relations between East and West, which may result in lessening the risks of nuclear war.

I have risen to put on record the reasons why I take the view, to which I have come slowly over the years, that we should have an energy policy that does not incorporate a nuclear component. I say that, having been responsible for the Atomic Energy Authority as Minister of Technology, from 1966 to 1970 and again as Secretary of State for Energy from 1975 to 1979.

I express my respect for the scientists and people who work in the industry. Many of them were motivated to work for civil nuclear power because they believed it was an alternative to the military uses of nuclear energy. The Atoms for Peace campaign, which was launched by President Eisenhower, was seen as a major development of technology in the interests of mankind. It was certainly considered as such by my generation who remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was a classic case of swords into ploughshares, which my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson) expressed powerfully in his speech.

Nuclear energy was to be a peaceful development; it was to be cheaper and safe; and we were to be open about it. I regret to tell the House that my experience, over many years from that Dispatch Box, taught me that none of those arguments was true. I wish to point out one or two of the facts that the House should take into account.

Nuclear power began as a military operation. In the countries which have adopted it, it remains primarily necessary for military purposes. In India, Pakistan and Iran, and in Britain, it was wanted for military purposes. The first British reactor was built when Mr. Attlee decided that Britain needed the bomb. That desire was not confided to his Cabinet or to Parliament. That was the origin of the development of British nuclear power.

The proliferation which has followed has been a proliferation with military consequences. The House may be aware that within Euratom, of which we are members, there is no safeguard to prevent the French, who have not signed the non-proliferation treaty, from obtaining uranium for its bomb programme, even though that means that it is no longer possible for Canadian uranium to come to Britain because it would go outside its safeguards.

It is an expensive technology, concealed by the fact that the research and development has been paid for by the Ministry of Defence. Recently the French stated that it would cost 40 per cent. of the cost of construction of a new power station to decommission a nuclear power station. It would cost about £600 million to decommission each nuclear power station.

We have no answer to the waste problem. I accept that whether we proceed or—as I believe we should—stop and phase out nuclear energy, there will a residual waste problem. Is nuclear energy safe? It was only by an act of God or of chance that the accident occurred in Chernobyl, not here.

In 1969, I was Minister of Technology when the corrosion occurred at the Magnox stations. I was told in great detail how a meltdown might occur if it was impossible to close the reactor down and if the heat exchanger ruptured. At Windscale there was a serious fire, and serious leaks also occurred. Another leak occurred at the end of my period as Secretary of State for Energy. A soil sample was taken in December 1978, but it was not analysed until March 1979. I was informed of the analysis a few days later, and 2,200 gallons of highly toxic waste had seeped into the earth. It lies there today under the clay, just above the water table. When I asked about cleaning it, I was told that a new plant would be required for the clean-up operation. For that reason, one of my last acts as a Minister was to state that there should be an inquiry into Windscale.

There was a near-disaster at Three Mile Island. But people may not be aware of what happened at Brown's Ferry in America. A fuse blew at that site. A scientist was sent to look for the fuse box with a candle, and he set fire to the safety circuit.

There was serious corrosion at Winfrith. It was discovered that a dissatisfied employee had urinated into the equipment, and Scotland Yard had to be called in to discover how the corrosion had occurred.

At Hunterston a valve was turned the wrong way and sea water was brought into the station. As a result, the power station was out of action for a year.

One cannot exclude human error. There have been many cover-ups. When there was a big explosion in Kyshtym American intelligence picked it up and told the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1958, but American intelligence also told it not to tell British Ministers. When 200 tonnes of uranium was stolen from Euratom in 1968 I was Minister, but I was not told, on the ground that Britain was not a member of the Common Market.

The biggest cover-up of all, for which I shall never forgive those responsible, was that throughout the period when I was Minister plutonium from our atoms-for-peace reactors was going to America to make bombs and warheads that would return to American bases here. That view has been confirmed by Ministers in this Government. I was cross-examined about it at the Sizewell inquiry, and only recently has it been admitted that the atoms-for-peace power stations are in reality bomb factories for the United States.

The environmental hazards of nuclear power both now and later are too great for us to take. The cumulative effect of radioactivity is very different from the reassuring

[Mr. Tony Benn]

statements that we receive about little doses that may come from time to time. The military implications of what happened at Chernobyl are phenomenal. People must now know that if we bomb Russia, the bombs that we drop will release radioactivity that will ultimately destroy us, and if conventional weapons are dropped on our nuclear power stations radioactivity comparable to that from a nuclear attack will be released.

The civil liberties of which we are so proud are bound to go by the board when dealing with such a dangerous technology that has military implications. I have been to the plutonium store in Dounreay. It is like a bank vault. One can understand why the Atomic Energy Authority constabulary is armed with orders to shoot to kill in the event of an attempt to steal plutonium. We must phase out nuclear power. We must cancel the PWR, abandon the Dounreay project, close Sellafield and decommission nuclear stations, beginning with the older stations. Anyone who thinks that the industry's skills will not be required should bear in mind that it will take the skill of every nuclear engineer for 10 years to clean up what has, alas, been created.

The miners were right to say that coal should be the basis of our future energy needs. In the 1960s the pits were closed on the ground that oil would always be cheaper. In the 1980s they were closed on the ground that nuclear energy was better. We should go for a coal programme. Even my Department admitted that, even with the fiddled figures for nuclear energy, coal was as cheap as nuclear power. We should also go for conservation and for alternative sources of energy.

I fear that Chernobyl will not be the last accident. I listened to the debate and wondered how different it would have been if that accident had occurred at Bradwell, Hunterston, Oldbury or Torness. I share the view expressed today. This is a technology that humanity cannot handle, and, not for the first time, the public are ahead of Parliament in perceiving that.

7.33 pm

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) spoke from his experience in government. I speak as someone who has been involved in the sphere of energy in Parliament for about 12 years. During that time we have seen major changes in different parts of the energy equation. We saw oil prices rocket, causing alternatives to come into play. We then, of course, saw prices fall. Coal went out of favour through needless political militancy, and natural gas developed as a major source of both domestic and commercial fuel.

During all that time, the concept of nuclear power as a one-fifth component in our electricity generation has remained constant, although various systems for its generation have gone in and out of scientific and political favour. But in this country the underlying factor in our debates and discussions has always been that of safety, even if the cost in design and construction terms has meant that we have been slower and less economic in our nuclear development.

With a massive over-capacity of generating power throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, and with the seven AGRs coming into commission between 1976 and the late 1980s, there has been no urgency for new nuclear capacity except now on the grounds of maintaining a low-cost baseload generation of electricity, of needing to keep the nuclear construction industry in existence and of requiring replacements for the Magnox stations which began their careers in 1956, 30 years ago. The debate in recent years has essentially become one of choice of design of thermal reactor. It has been a debate about the thermal reactor that we will need for the next half century and about whether it should be the AGR or the PWR, gas-cooled reactors or water-cooled reactors. There has also been the parallel debate, which the right hon. Member for Chesterfield recreated, of nuclear energy versus coal.

I have never believed in a picture of the next century of power generation comprising anything other than mainly nuclear reactors, with oil fading off the scene and coal replacing oil as the main industrial feedstock, and not being used for electricity generation. In any case, coal is a heavy polluter of the earth's atmosphere and produces a death toll many times greater than that of nuclear power. In the United States, it is estimated that some 25,000 people die each year as a result of coal burning. Nevertheless, in the short term, coal is available, albeit at a high cost to the consumer and at a high cost in terms of security of supply.

Alternatives such as wave or wind power, or even solar power, could assist a little in the overall electricity equation, but we should still be left with the need for that crucial 20 to 25 per cent. baseload supply of low-cost nuclear power. Even on that basis, we should be far behind other European countries, such as France with 60 to 75 per cent., Belgium with 60 per cent., or Germany with 45 per cent. or more, which all supply electricity 20 per cent. more cheaply to our competitors in industry.

The recent Tokyo summit declaration stated:

"Nuclear power is, and properly managed will continue to be an increasingly widely used source of energy".

I support that international view, and I hope that the House and the country will also support it. But the declaration went on to say:

"For each country the maintenance of safety and security is an international responsibility and each country engaged in nuclear power generation bears full responsibility for the safety of the design, manufacture, operation and maintenance of its installations".

The Russian nuclear disaster, like other high-tech disasters that they have experienced, was due to their failure to maintain the high standards required. It is essential now that the Soviet Government should join fully in the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency to achieve safe international guidelines. But we would be wrong, and would fail in our duty as legislators, if we allowed ourselves to panic over this issue. The consequences would rebound on future generations just as surely as would our failure to effect proper safeguards over the use of atomic power for peaceful purposes.

That also means the processes of dealing with nuclear waste, with which the Select Committee concerned itself. A few weeks ago, I visited Sellafield and was reassured to find a new realisation among the management that the ways of the past were no longer acceptable and that much more effective safety controls must be introduced.

The Select Committee report was wide-ranging, hard-hitting and constructive. I am pleased that the nuclear industry's response was not to rubbish the report but to agree to look at each recommendation very carefully. The public, quite naturally, are deeply concerned about the dangers of radiation, and until they receive proper explanations and reassurances from the experts—I do

not mean just those working within the reprocessing industry—it is understandable that they should give the thumbs down to nuclear power developments.

At the moment, any release of radioactivity causes alarm, even if the level is well below that received from other normal processes in life. The nuclear industry must find a language that is clearly understood by everyone, so that very low-level activity such as that from discarded clothing or gloves is understood to be less than that from a television set. When we talk of safe nuclear reactor systems, we must be able to explain to the layman exactly why they are safe.

The Chernobyl reactor was by all accounts a reactor waiting for a disaster. The complacency of the Russians in allowing poor manufacturing standards and compromise technology led to the world's worst nuclear disaster. Yet warnings had been given by our own nuclear experts back in 1978 when they pinpointed the Russian RBMK reactors as having crucial flaws in design, with the absence of secondary containment vessels, reactor shutdown devices and emergency cooling systems. The use of graphite as a moderator and the extremely high operating temperature of 750 deg. C meant that, if steam came into contact with the graphite, a violent reaction would set in and the subsequent generation of hot hydrogen gas would lead to ignition and explosion.

Therefore, pending the outcome of the Sizewell inquiry, we should redouble our efforts to secure every piece of information we can get through the international agency, not only about every type of nuclear reactor being used in the world, but about all the small incidents which have occurred and which will help us in ensuring the integral safety of the system that we eventually decide to develop.

For example, not far from here is the French nuclear system. Some of their older gas reactors also use graphite as a moderator. Electricité de France has announced that its technology is completely different. So there is no intention to close down those reactors; it says that they have concrete screening anyway. The French have more than 50 nuclear reactors in operation or under construction. Apart from the four older gas graphite reactors and the two fast breeder reactors, all the others are PWRs and are judged to be considerably safer than the older plants.

The Sizewell PWR design is also considered to be far safer than the older PWRs like the Three Mile Island reactor, which is 20 years old. The French are massively engaged in nuclear generation. I hope that our scientitst and safety experts are co-operating closely with the French, so that all the information about their nuclear experiences can be made known.

There must be no secrecy. If nuclear power is to play the part that I believe it should in our future energy scene, it must be on the basis of total understanding of the technology and the safety system that is built into the reactors. The public perception that by opting out of nuclear power and declaring Britain a nuclear-free zone we will in one bound be free from any possible radiation danger, is obviously false. The use of this immense source of cheap energy is an international concern and the Chernobyl disaster has brought home that fact, even to the Russians. Such a disaster should not, and must not, be allowed to happen again. The extra costs inherent in a safe system of nuclear generation are a burden that mankind is prepared to pay, just as we must pay the extra costs for safety in chemicals manufacture and in coal burning.

If the Chernobyl accident had happened in the United States, the political anger and furore would have been immense. The other side would have been deafening in its accusations of cutting corners, of placing profit before safety and of lack of concern either for employees or for the neighbouring community. But the accident did not happen in the free West and we can justifiably argue that, under our system of public inquiry, licensing regulations and safety requirements, the Chernobyl form of reactor would never have been built here.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy was right to state that there would have been no disaster at Chernobyl had the Soviet Union followed the procedures of the democracies. But what has happened has happened, and many people and families, while acccepting the points that I have just made, are still extremely worried about the possibility that, given all the safety we can build into our systems, we could still have the risk of a nuclear accident, however remote.

So a major task faces the international agencies of government and industry. I am confident that we can resolve the problem and continue to have the low-cost energy for the future which only nuclear power can provide.

7.43 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): It is such a rare occurrence for the Government, in the face of the evidence, to take a sensible decision to change their mind that we must begin by welcoming the Government's decision, in their response to the Select Committee, that they no longer intend to place intermediate-level waste, however short-lived, in shallow disposal facilities. That is a small step in the right direction and is much to be welcomed.

However, the Government's initial response to the Select Committee is, I fear, severely inadequate in other respects. In dealing with the shallow disposal facilities, the Government have not taken on board the Select Committee's recommendations about the definition of low level waste, about the alpha emissions of such waste or about the radionuclides that are contained in much of the waste that goes into Drigg, for example. There should be a much tighter definition of low-level waste which may well go into one of the four sites for which NIREX is currently prospecting.

In addition, the Government have said nothing about what they intend to do with the intermediate-level waste. The long-term answer is to stop the reprocessing operation, because it is only through reprocessing that intermediate-level waste is produced. None the less, we have such waste and something has to be done with it. As the Government have said nothing about how they propose to deal with that waste, there are severe inadequacies even around the one concession which they made on receipt of the evidence produced by the Select Committee.

The Government have also failed to deal with some of the major proposals of the Select Committee about the operation of Drigg and the need to have a much more carefully engineered and monitored facility for the disposal of low-level waste. We must recall that the Select Committee said unequivocally that Drigg is an unacceptable model for the disposal of any waste, however

[Mr. Chris Smith]

low-level. I have been to Drigg and have found that it is operated like a municipal rubbish tip, with none of the safeguards which any reasonable member of the public would expect on a disposal site for low-level waste. If we are to continue with the shallow disposal of even the lowest level of radioactive waste, there must be much more careful monitoring of the waste when it arrives at the disposal facility. It must be packaged properly and its disposal must be carefully engineered; it should not just be tipped in, as happens at present.

The Government have not dealt properly with any of those recommendations in their response to the Select Committee. They say that improvements can be and are being made in line with current practice, but that is not good enough. That will not satisfy the enormous public concern which justifiably exists about the way in which the by-products of the nuclear production process are handled and disposed of.

Much to my disappointment, the Government have not yet replied to the Select Committee's comments on the transport of nuclear waste. Nearly every night, trains carrying nuclear waste pass through my constituency. The Select Committee had graphic evidence about what might happen, admittedly in remotely conceivable occurrences, if an accident took place to one of those trains. The evidence was that, if a train carrying nuclear waste were to catch fire, radiation could spread over a wide area. The Select Committee made specific recommendations about the timetabling of the movement of such trains. The Government have not yet responded to those recommendations. The matter is urgent. The Government should carefully consider those recommendations and should produce early answers about the future transportation of nuclear waste around the country and particularly through my constituency.

Having said that the Government's initial response is inadequate in those respects, I must also say that the root cause of the nuclear waste problem and of the Government's reluctance to deal with nuclear waste properly lies in their long-standing love affair with the nuclear industry. The Government are moving firmly in the wrong direction. About 17 per cent. of our electricity production comes from nuclear generation. The Government intend — they revealed this to me in a parliamentary answer some months ago — to increase that percentage to 25 per cent. by 1990. That is a move in the wrong direction. We shold move down from 17 per cent. instead of up.

Britain's future energy production should be based on the principal production of coal-fired power stations using cleanburn technology. Much rubbish has been talked about acid rain being produced by coal-fired power stations. Of course acid rain is produced by the gases that come from coal-fired power stations, but the technology exists to remove the gases and to burn coal cleanly. That is the way forward for our electricity production, coupled with major programmes of alternative energy, research in conservation measures that are badly needed in much of the rotten housing in which many of people must live and combined heat and power schemes in power stations, which could provide good, cheap energy resources. That is the way forward for a sensible energy policy.

I have heard nothing from the Government or from their Back-Bench Members — who protest too much about their worries — to convince me that the Government have a sensible energy policy. We need an energy policy that uses our indigenous resources and that commands widespread public support. The way forward is clear and the Labour Government who will come into office next year will follow that much more sensible policy.

7.51 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I echo the remarks made by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) about the nuclear industry meeting the needs of the people, but we also need politicians who will be a little more honest with the people about the risks. The hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) criticised the National Radiological Protection Board and regaled the House with a record of a conversation in which a board representative said that giving advice not to play in the rain could create public panic. That is right. On 3 May, in Glasgow, when the radiation in the rain was measured at 10,000 becquerels per litre — which I understand was one of the highest recorded levels in Britain — even if someone had gone out and drunk rainwater throughout the day, the effect on his health would be the equivalent of smoking one cigarette every 50 days. It was negligible.

From the accounts broadcast by BBC Scotland and the rest of the Scottish media, the public were left with the clear impression that there was a major cause for anxiety. Constituents telephoned my home and asked whether it was safe for children to touch the grass. That unjustified public hysteria was created and promoted by some politicians, notably the hon member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and some of his Liberal friends, who have now left the Chamber. They deliberately sought to wind up public concern to further their position, which is difficult to define but which is broadly hostile to nuclear power.

The facts are that in no part of Britain were the public health effects of the fallout from the Chernobyl disaster —all hon. Members have considerable sympathy for the people who were affected by it in the Soviet Union— any worse than they would be for someone taking a fortnight's holiday in Cornwall. I say that because in parts of Cornwall, as in parts of the constituency of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), the background count was considerably higher because of the presence of radoactive granite. Indeed, 1 per cent. of the homes in Cornwall—that represents 4,000 people—are exposed to radiation from the rocks which make up their homes at a greater level than would be tolerated at Sellafield, which is 5 rems.

Liberal Members, especially the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, who talk about emergency levels in milk would do well to read the report of the Kemeny commission, which was set up to investigate the effects of the Three Mile Island disaster. Its conclusion was that the worst effects on public health came from irresponsible politicians and irresponsible people in the media, who needlessly created great public anxiety and stress. More people's lives were shortened through that stress than were ever in danger from radioactivity. I recognise that there are worries, but in this debate people should examine the facts and try to communicate them instead of fanning the flames of hysteria.

The British nuclear industry has a remarkable record. Despite the scares and some of the speeches that we have

heard, it remains true that the average family watching television for four hours a day receives far more radiation than anyone living within five miles of a nuclear power station.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Rubbish.

Mr. Forsyth: It is not rubbish; it has been measured. Hon. Members who have done any science will be aware that X-rays are emitted by the cathode ray tubes in colour televison sets.

Mr. Bruce: That is not what we are considering.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman says that, but he is wrong. We are talking about the effects of electromagnetic radiation on people's health.

Apart from background radiation, the largest doses of radiation received by most people come in the form of medical applications, including X-rays. Workers in nuclear power receive larger doses than most of us. The right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) said that we should concentrate on coal and that six deaths at Chernobyl are not the same as six deaths in the mines. He would do well to remember that, since 1975, there have been nine deaths in the nuclear industry—none of them because of radiation, and all of them conventional accidents—compared with 399 deaths in coal mining. If our worry is for workers' health, nuclear power wins hands down. If hon. Members are worried about exposure to radiation, they should turn their attention to British Airways, because aircraft crew are exposed to twice as much radiation as the rest of us on the ground.

If we consider the facts and statistics about the risk of premature death from accidents and cancer, we discover that, in deep-sea fishing, the figure is one in 400; in coal mining, it is one in 4,000; in construction, it is one in 5,000; the average for all employment is one in 20,000; and for radiation workers, the figure is one in 20,000. Nuclear workers are at less risk than workers in those other industries.

The Liberals wish to have it all ways. They tell us that they wish to decommission nuclear power stations. They should address their minds to the costs of doing that, because there are risks from other means of generation. We shall lose tremendous advantages if we give up nuclear power. Whatever the hon. Member for Gordon says, the French enjoy a £1 billion cost advantage over British industry because of their nuclear power, yet he continually tells the House that we should do more for our manufacturing base. We could hardly do more damage than by removing the opportunities to be competitive on energy.

Indeed, this Scottish Member had the cheek to come to the House and tell us that he wants to see the Magnox stations decommissioned, when in Scotland electricity is 25 per cent. less expensive that it would otherwise be, thanks to nuclear power. The Opposition made a great fuss about cold weather and heating allowances. The great benefit that Scotland enjoys is cheap electricity, and that is due to the investment that has been made in nuclear power. Pensioners in Scotland and the poor who are worried about their heating bills should know for certain that the Liberals and the Labour party will put up their fuel bills so that there would be more deaths from hypothermia and, indeed, in the coal mines and elsewhere.

If it is employment that hon. Members are worried about, they can explain to the people in the west of Scotland working for Babcock Power and Wear Pumps, who have 1,200 man-years of work riding on the other of a nuclear power station after Sizewell, why their jobs were lost because of the ideological opposition of those Members.

Those who seem to think it is possible to duck the question of disposal simply by saying that we will not have a nuclear power industry can also explain to the people in hospital and elsewhere who benefit from radiation treatment that there will be no place to dispose of the radionuclides in use. There is a tremendous gap between the public understanding of radioactive waste and the reality of the danger that it presents.

I commend to the House the excellent paper presented to us by the nuclear industry. It shows that the average surburban garden contains 4 lb of uranium and 13 lb of thorium and that the natural radioactivity that exists all round us presents a far greater threat than the low-level waste that we are discussing. Indeed, the idea that garden fertiliser containing radioactive potassium should have half the level of waste of what is exercising my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) in itself shows the extent to which the debate has got out of hand.

The Select Committee states that it believes that no alpha-emitting low-level waste should be disposed of. I conclude by pointing out that in Scotland the granite chips to be found on everybody's drive emit alpha radiation containing long-life nuclides in the form of uranium. Opposition Members are saying here that in no way can we allow this sort of material to be buried in the soil, when in Scotland it is placed in drives to prevent motor cars from sinking into the soil. I believe that we need a debate in the country, but it must be a responsible one, based on rational choices and real information.

8.2 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): We are discussing not only the Select Committee's report and the Government's partial response to that part of it which deals with the disposal of low-level and intermediate-level waste, but the accident that everybody — including the Secretary of State for Energy, who recently visited the Soviet Union and came back and reported that Soviet nuclear energy was safe — said could never happen. To blame the Soviet Union and suggest that its systems are so different from ours that it could never happen here is to insult the intelligence not only of the House but of the British public.

Other matters have not been dealt with adequately in the debate. After the speech of the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who eloquently produced the nuclear industry's brief, I want to deal with some of the points on which he touched and which affect the recommendations of the Select Committee, to which the Government have not yet responded.

I deal first with the consequences and risks in nuclear energy. The nuclear industry argues that new technologies, ideas and ventures have always been resisted. Nuclear energy, the industry argues, is like electricity. It is said that some people used to believe that, if one left the plug out, electricity would escape. That is not true, but it is certainly true of nuclear power and nuclear energy. To compare, as the nuclear industry always does, the background radiation of a television set or flying in a jet with what happened at Chernobyl and what could be released into the environment if a major accident happened

[Mr. Allan Roberts]

at a nuclear power station is again to insult the intelligence of the British people. To compare the kind of accidents in which people are killed in coal mines—ignoring those being killed in the uranium mines—with the possibility of a nuclear accident, which, as my hon. Friends have said, affects not only those working in the industry and, as happened in the Aberfan disaster, those living near the area, but future generations and the genetic structure of human beings and those yet unborn is to compare things that are very different in nature. Nuclear accidents are quite different in kind from any accidents in the coal mining industry or in factories.

We are talking about different levels of waste and radioactive discharges. First, there are discharges to the environment and radioactive water going into the Irish sea. Any single discharge has a background radiation level lower than that in bricks and on the television screen. It was thought that the sea would disperse it, but it has not done so. That statistic does not take account of the build-up of a continuing discharge of low-level radioactivity. The build-up is such that even worms go through it and become radioactive; fish eat the worms; and that is the chain reaction back to mankind. Nobody knows the consequences of a build-up of discharges to the environment, which must be stopped.

As to the low-level waste that will be put in shallow-burial engineered trenches, the Government have now accepted the recommendations of the Select Committee. That is despite the fact that the Secretary of State for Energy, pre-Chernobyl, was rubbishing the regulations and saying that these were merely the views of a few Back Benchers with advisers who were passionately anti-nuclear. The Secretary of State for Energy, pre-Chernobyl, praised the safety record of Sellafield and described the Select Committee's report as "lovely, emotive phrases" to which he said he would be responding formally after studying the report.

Now we have the Secretary of State for the Environment, in the aftermath of Chernobyl and public opinion, saying that the Select Committee on the Environment in its report on radioactive waste has helped to clarify the issues involved. Indeed, I believe that it has, because there is the acceptance that low-level waste should not be put in shallow-burial sites unless they are engineered and sealed off as the dangers are recognised.

It is also said that intermediate-level waste should not be put in the same sites. The hon. Member for Stirling compared that low-level waste with the high-level waste from the nuclear industry. No high-level waste comes from hospitals or any other industry. The high-level waste is the spent fuel waste that has to be stored disposed of or reprocessed. The reprocessing produces liquid high-level waste, which is now stored in huge tanks at Sellafield and stirred to stop it settling, and it has yet to be vitrified and disposed of.

The Select Committee toured nearly every nuclear advanced country in the world. Not one country, as yet, has conclusively proved that this high-level waste can be safely disposed of in deep geological disposal sites. If the Government want to put low-level and intermediate-level waste in deep geological disposal sites in hon. Members constituencies, they must prove that it is safe. Nobody has yet disposed of any high-level waste anywhere in the world. It is still stored in France, which is the most advanced country, vitrified and ready for disposal. Research is going on in every country in the world, except this country, as to how, or whether, one can dispose of it.

If it is put in a mine, in granite, clay or salt, as the Germans are doing, one has to be certain that, not for 100 years, not for 1,000 years, but for 1 million years that radioactivity that has been sealed up will not get back into man's environment. It can return to man's environment if water passes over it and through it and it gets into the water course. No one has proved conclusively anywhere in the world—the onus is on the Government and the industry to engage in research and to produce proof, and if it cannot it must stop production — that it can be disposed of safely.

I was pleased when my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said that the next Labour Government would review THORP. The Government have not dealt with the issue raised by the Select Committee, which is whether reprocessing should continue and whether THORP should be completed. When the THORP contract arose and we were to start reprocessing, the world price of uranium was high and it was felt that it was necessary to recover uranium and to produce plutonium. As my right hon. and hon. Friends have said, plutonium is required for bombs, and it is needed also for the fast breeder reactor.

When I visited America with other members of the Select Committee, we found that President Carter had stopped all the reprocessing of civil spent fuel rods. He had separated the specific reprocessing plant that would reprocess what plutonium was needed for American bombs. At that time he was getting plutonium from us secretly. President Carter costed this and separated the reprocessing plant from the rest of the programme. At that time the Democrats were committed to non-proliferation and they did not want to produce more plutonium than they needed for themselves. President Reagan has said that production can increase if it is economically viable, but it has not increased because it would not be commercially viable to take that course. That is because the world price of uranium has dropped dramatically. In Canada, for example, it is coming out of their ears. There needs to be a reassessment.

I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland say that the next Labour Government would repeal the Official Secrets Act and end the military production of plutonium. How dare the Government attack the Russians for their secrecy? British Members of Parliament who were members of the Select Committee that went to the United States were shown the costings for the military and civil nuclear programmes. They were shown where the plutonium was produced for military purposes and they were given the facts and figures that were denied to them in Britain because of the Official Secrets Act. The Government would not tell us the truth about what was happening at Sellafield. Those who doubt me—*[Interruption.]* there is no need for hon. Members to shout at me—should speak to those Conservative Members who were part of the group that went to America whether what I have said is true.

I and other members of the Select Committee went to Drigg, and we saw things that would not have been allowed in any other country. We found that low-level and intermediate-level waste — at first it was denied that intermediate-level waste was being handled in this way —was dumped into shallow trenches and covered with

soil. Water leached through it, and the result was radioactivity in streams. None of the other nuclear countries that the Select Committee visited would have tolerated that. Not one of them would have allowed that activity to continue.

As members of a Select Committee, we were not able to compare the economics of the nuclear industry with those of coal-fired power stations. That was because we could not obtain the facts about the cross-subsidisation of the military and civil processes. We were not able to obtain any real costings of the necessary research to deal with the disposal of high-level nuclear waste. I am convinced to this day that the long-term consequences of controlling, monitoring and disposing of nuclear waste will be so costly that the economic case that has been argued so far, which is based on the cost of producing electricity from nuclear power, will be proved to be entirely wrong.

The nuclear industry and the Government must rethink their cavalier attitude in the light not only of public opinion but of an accident that many said would never happen. Chernobyl has demonstrated clearly to the British people the consequences of a major nuclear accident. The public feel that it could happen here, and they need more than reassurance. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said, they realise that if such consequences can flow from an accident in a civil nuclear power station, the consequences would be immensely more severe from a nuclear weapon containing plutonium. At least the accident at Chernobyl did not put plutonium into the air, but that would happen if one small bomb exploded. No Government can offer any defence against nuclear weapons and their use. A nuclear power is in effect saying to its enemy, "If you attack us, we shall commit suicide." That has become more and more obvious during this debate.

8.15 pm

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I hope that the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) will forgive me if I do not take up his remarks. I am not sure that I agree with all of his conclusions, but I listened to his speech with great interest, as did the rest of the House.

I shall confine my remarks to the NIREX proposal that the four sites which have been proposed should be surveyed for their suitability for the disposal of low-level waste in a near-surface disposal facility. I welcome the Government's decision to reject the proposal that the sites should be considered for the disposal of intermediate-level waste. It is a significant move and one which has been welcomed widely. I accept that the nature of the waste that will be deposited, should one of the sites be selected ultimately, will not necessarily be as dangerous as those who are concerned about the proposals would have us believe. We have a nuclear industry, whether we abandon it tomorrow or not, we know that industrial research involves the use and production of some radioactive material, and we know that medical research and treatment in hospitals leads in certain areas to radioactive by-products. It follows, therefore, that we must address ourselves to the disposal of radioactive material.

I do not believe that the nuclear industry will be served by foisting on those who live around any one of the four sites a near-surface disposal facility when they do not consent to the same, when they do not want it, and when they object wholeheartedly to it.

My constituency is about 18 miles from the proposed site of South Killingholme and objection to the proposal has been mobilised in the constituency to tremendous effect. I believe that more than 120,000 people in the Humberside area have signed a petition that rejects the proposal, especially on the south bank. The people do not want it, principally because they are afraid of the consequences and implications.

I do not believe that we can get the public to accept the proposed disposal facilities unless they are fully informed, unless they understand, and unless they give their consent. If, in the face of overwhelming objections, the Government, or NIREX, proceed to survey the sites, go through the process of a public planning inquiry and ultimately select a site — we know that one will be selected, whatever may be said now—no good will be done to the nuclear industry. I speak on behalf of a constituency where steel is made, and if there is one thing that is important to the steel industry it is cheap energy. Even if we accept that the radioactive waste that we are discussing is safe and can be disposed of in the way that is proposed, it is arrogant of the Government and NIREX to proceed in the face of opposition of the sort that now exists.

Only France and the United States are using near-surface disposal facilities. They are not doing it in Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Sweden, Belgium, Finland or, from the point of view of containment, in France. All those countries are using deep geological disposal methods for all waste—not just for intermediate and high-level waste, but for low-level waste, too. It is impossible to persuade the public that this type of facility is suitable for low-level waste when all those countries have decided that it is not suitable and are using alternative methods.

This policy does not depend upon demonstrating to right hon. and hon. Members or to experts that this method is safe. Safety is not the issue. The issue is public acceptability, consent, understanding and knowledge. If consent or acceptance cannot be obtained in the face of such objections, the Government run the risk of losing the nuclear argument altogether. If, willy-nilly, this policy is thrust down people's throats, the momentum of objections will build up to such an extent that the nuclear argument will be lost.

Therefore, I say to my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench — who no doubt, as soon as I got to my feet, went somewhere else — that they should look at the alternatives. They should examine what the countries that I have mentioned have done. They should consider deep sea disposal and deep-mined disposal. We know that Drigg can be used for another 25 years. If the Government have responded to public pressure by making a concession on intermediate-level nuclear waste, I urge them to respond in the same way to the disposal of low-level waste.

No research whatsoever seems to have been carried out in the United Kingdom into the method of disposal of this type of waste. There should be a period of reflection, investigation and research. Unless at the end of the day the British public—I speak in particular of my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown)—can be persuaded that this type of facility is desirable, the Government run the risk of losing the nuclear industry argument altogether.

8.22 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The issues that have to be faced in this debate are safety of technology and information about that technology. The nuclear industry is a public industry. A massive amount of public money is invested in it. Such a high level of public investment means that there must be full public accountability.

I was pleased that the Secretary of State for the Environment told us at the beginning of the debate that all kinds of incidents will now be reported. Responsible station managers in the Central Electricity Generating Board, such as the present manager at Trawsfynydd, are already doing that. That is because the public in the Trawsfynydd area, the media, myself and others demand it. Any incident at that station is reported immediately to members of the local liaison committee and to the media in the locality. That must apply to all stations and to all nuclear installations.

After his statement this afternoon, I assume that the Secretary of State for Environment will make it clear that all incidents, of whatever type — whether or not they relate to a reactor, or whether they are engineering or nuclear incidents in the stricter sense of the term where there is radiological danger or the minutest radiological emission, either on site or off site—should immediately be reported.

There must be openness and accountability about the way in which the effects of the Chernobyl disaster were reported in Britain and discussed in Britain by representatives of the nuclear industry. There must also be openness and accountability about the way in which the amounts of radioactive fissile material that affected our environment were treated. I wish to refer briefly to each of those issues, and I shall begin with the last, the level of discharges in this country.

Britain is not geared to monitoring effectively a release of fissile material into the atmosphere. Confused data from different sources were released. I live in an area that is close to a nuclear power station which has its own district monitoring sytem. Both I and the people who work at the station knew reasonably clearly that there was a massively increased level of radioactivity, compared with the background level, in that area following the high rainfall of that weekend. I had telephone calls both at home and at my office from staff at the station who were concerned about the fact that the levels of radioactivity that they were monitoring had not been made public.

The use of the CEGB network, on behalf of the National Radiological Protection Board, to provide material meant that in certain localities there was a fairly good picture of what was going on. However, it appears that the amount of information that was made available by the NRPB, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Welsh Office and the Scottish Office was completely inadequate. The information was confused and it was not properly interpreted.

I am particularly concerned about the level of radioactive iodine in milk. I am concerned that a political decision might have been taken either by MAFF or by the Department of the Environment that the real levels of radioactive iodine that were being measured in milk during that period of high rainfall should not be released to the public and were not used to advise Ministers that there should be a cessation of milk consumption, particularly by young people and children.

The levels that were reached were at least 30 per cent. of the derived emergency reference levels, not only in milk, but in rainfall. Those were levels at which action should have been taken. We are dealing not with absolute levels but with levels which have been laid down relative to what is regarded as tolerable.

There is increasing argument about the so-called permitted dosage. This issue concerns me as a representative of nuclear power workers. It also concerns me as the representative of constituents who live in a high rainfall area. We need to look carefully at the way in which this information was handled and disseminated to the public. We need also to look at the ministerial action that was taken on this information.

Many right hon. and hon. Members feel that the initial statements by the relevant Departments and, indeed, the statements made to the House by the Secretary of State for the Environment, were misleading. When he made his initial statement to the House, the Secretary of State for the Environment stated that water and milk were safe, but he did not make it clear whether he was referring to aggregate United Kingdom levels, or to specific areas, or whether he was speaking in general terms. The quality of the data that were available from different areas in the United Kingdom was insufficient to enable the public to decide whether they wanted to consume milk or to expose their children to that hazard.

Conservative Members have today used a spurious argument about the risk factors that are involved in different levels of exposure during different kinds of activity — what I call the cigarette syndrome. This argument no longer washes with the public. The public need to know the additional risk to which they are exposed from radiation from the nuclear power industry, the generating industry and, finally, from the nuclear processing industry. The public will not be fobbed off with spurious comparisons.

Certain spokespersons for the nuclear power industry, and certain right hon. and hon. Members said in a programme in which I took part earlier this week that if the public were given the information about the number of becquerels involved and other technical information they would not understand it, but it is of the same kind of complexity as the pollen count. Information about the pollen count is given regularly throughout the summer as part of our weather forecasts. If we had a proper level of scientific education in Britain, people would be capable of understanding information presented in specific terms. We do not have that yet, but we might have it as a result of the public interest now aroused. We must ensure that the figures are made available.

The second issue is not about information on the specific dosages and the results of exposure to the effects of the cloud, but about the lessons that Britain's nuclear industry must learn. I am concerned that experts in the nuclear industry should not only suggest that such an incident could not happen in this country, but apparently imply that there is no possible Chernobyl scenario for the existing reactor systems in Britain. I have lived close to the old type of Magnox reactor, so I am especially concerned that people are pretending that the combination of materials inside the Chernobyl reactor is not inside British reactors.

Lord Walter Marshall has made the famous statement that the reactor systems in Britain have forms of containment that are not available in the Soviet Union. I know the Trawsfynydd reactor intimately. I have seen it from all possible angles, except from inside. That reactor, like all the old Magnox reactors, does not have secondary containment. It has the major vessel and the biological shield, but the steam generating gas loops come out of the reactor vessel. That applies to all of the old Magnox reactors. The newer forms of reactors have a larger pressure vessel that contains the engineering aspects. The Magnox gas-cooled reactor is different from the form of coolant in the Soviet model. However, it is wrong to suggest that it is not possible to have a loss of coolant through a loss of gas from the Magnox reactors. Indeed, that has happened on a small scale and for example, water ingress to the reactor and loss of coolant.

To pretend that has not happened is to deny the information held by those who follow the nuclear debate. There may be a scenario that has a minimal risk, but as a result of Chernobyl the public now perceive that those pundits of the nuclear industry who have said that it could not happen here have been misleading them. The Secretary of State has picked up the new mood—even if some of his hon. Friends have not—of serious questioning and concern.

I represent a constituency which contains a nuclear power station employing 600 people. What will happen to communities such as Trawsfynydd if the climate of opinion in Britain means that we will not invest in a massive replacement of the Magnox generation? We may not build AGRs and we will certainly not build PWRs. There is an objection on the Opposition Benches, and by many Conservative Members, to constructing PWRs in Britain, whatever the Sizewell inquiry recommends. What will happen to communities, many in areas of high unemployment, which are dependent upon the nuclear industry? The Government and the Opposition must face that question. We must ensure that jobs are maintained in those areas. We want assurances now about jobs in areas such as Trawsfynydd which have the old Magnox stations which face decommissioning. We must tackle the issue now, not defer it until 1990 or 1995.

8.34 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Conservation has been mentioned several times tonight, not least by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). It is appropriate in this debate to say that we are products of our environment. I was at university during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when there was great concern about conservation of the environment and the safety of the civil nuclear industry. The two, of course, are inextricably linked.

In succeeding years it is not surprising that, in the battle for our very economic survival, those issues have been pushed into a backwater inhabited mainly by the far Left and political eccentrics. It is no less surprising that, now that the success of the Government's economic policies has given the country sustained growth and low inflation, there should once again be more talk about the environment, and I welcome that. I especially welcome the efforts of my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment, Countryside and Local Government to ensure that the Conservative party dons its rightful mantle as the conservor of and carer for our environment.

We have to make two decisions on the nuclear industry —on Sizewell and on the disposal of nuclear waste— that raise fundamental issues about the future of our nuclear policy and concern about our environment. We are standing as it were on the threshold of a busy thoroughfare —traffic is coming towards us at great speed from the left and the right. I do not argue that we should stand still for ever or that we should vegetate on one spot, but we should stop, think, look and, above all, listen. I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) — it is time to pause for reflection.

There is no overwhelming urgency about either decision. There is no rule requiring elected, accountable — and, it must be said, disposable — Ministers to proceed at the behest of an unelected and unaccountable body such as NIREX, and to do so at a rapid pace. Much as we regret the publicity surrounding Sellafield—unfair as much of it may be—much as we regret the disaster at Chernobyl and much as it may be true that we rejected that design of reactor many years ago, public confidence in the nuclear industry has been shaken. We cannot ignore that fact.

I listened with great respect and care to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), and I agreed with much of what he said. However, the fact is that public confidence has been shaken. The incident at Chernobyl has proved the argument put forward for many years by those of us in the National Council for Civil Defence against official complacency and for more resources to be put into civil defence. The radioactive cloud that drifted towards Lincoln did not part like the Red sea when it appeared over the nuclear-free city—it carried on. We need effective civil defence, whatever our civil or military nuclear policies.

I do not believe that it is statesmenlike or resolute to fly in the face of public concern about the nuclear industry and to proceed regardless, without pausing for reflection. That is merely foolish. In a few days, 12,000 of my constituents —who were not given much time by the Government for consultation—signed a petition collected by West Lindsey district council objecting to the disposal of waste in Humberside and Lincolnshire. Barring a handful, they are not Greenpeace activists or flower-shaking dropouts —they are decent folk from villages and small towns who are both worried and concerned, and to whose views the Government should listen with sympathy and concern. They need reassurance.

I am the first to welcome the Government's decision to restrict the disposal of nuclear waste in shallow trenches to low-level waste. I know that we are now talking in terms of overalls and the like used in the nuclear industry and in hospitals. I know that the risks are small and I welcome the Government's concession, but I and my constituents need to be told the facts in full. My constituents need even more reassurance. Until they receive it, I cannot support the Government by voting for NIREX to be given powers to drill in either South Killingholme or Fulbeck.

I repeat what I have said before in the House: that we in Lincolnshire cannot merely say, "Put nuclear waste anywhere, except on our doorsteps, please." No Government can govern on that basis, ignoring the national interest. Ultimately, waste must be put in the best, that is the safest, geological site. The moral is clear, and has been pointed out by my hon and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) and my hon.

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg): Do as the Swedes do at Forsmark; put it in mines under the sea. Obviously, that is expensive, but if we are to have a successful, progressive nuclear industry, it must enjoy public confidence. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) said clearly, if we ignore the need for consent by the local population, we may put our entire nuclear industry at risk. No expense can be spared in ensuring that confidence.

I know that the volume of waste is large. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment talked about its being equivalent to eight Victoria towers in the Palace of Westminster. Would he like eight Victoria towers of low-level nuclear waste in his Mole Valley constituency or next door? We cannot ignore or despise public concern. My right hon. Friend mentioned the date 2010 when the Drigg site will be full. Does that not give us time for pause and reflection?

There is a perfectly good case to be made for the continued survival and growth of our nuclear industry in terms of the need for abundant and cheap energy to ensure our competitiveness. During the past 10 years, no fatality has been directly attributed to the nuclear industry in this country. It is necessary not to depend on militants in the coalfields, and the desirability of a four-fuel economy.

Safe nuclear power can legitimately be defended as better for the environment and for conservation than traditional coal-guzzling power stations. However, the analogy of standing on the edge of a busy road holds good. I beg the Government not to rush decisions, but to conduct a massive campaign, not of propaganda, but of information, and to reflect on the words written by William Deedes this weekend. When he was the Minister of Information in the 1963 Government, he was asked to conduct a massive campaign of information, not propaganda, on joining the European Community.

No expense should be spared on the campaign to explain patiently and at length where we are now and where we are going. If necessary, we should put the declared outcome of that consultation exercise in the manifesto, and let the people decide. That is fair, honourable, democratic and popular, and I commend it to the House.

8.42 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I shall concentrate on the central issue of the debate, which is nuclear waste disposal. The spine of the debate seems to be a commitment by the Government to get waste disposal dumps under way, preferably cheaply, and certainly as quickly as possible.

The Government seem committed to that because they see it as a prelude, first to the expansion of the reprocessing industry, as if it were Britain's destiny to act as the nuclear laundry for the rest of the world, and, secondly, to an expansion of the nuclear programme. The Government see the problem of nuclear waste as a bottleneck delaying both expansions. There is no need for that impetuous commitment. The waste can be stored and Drigg is not full and has many years of service to come. The CEGB will do whatever it is told regarding storage. There is no need for this rush, but the Government are committed to it.

The Environment Select Committee has shown clearly what is wrong. Theirs is the first considered strategy with an intellectual base of research which has been presented to us. It is the first basic rethink on dumping and reprocessing. In Committeespeak, which is always fairly guarded, a strong case has been made out against both. The two are closely interconnected, whatever Ministers may say, because reprocessing produces 70 per cent. or more of the low-level waste involved. I have received confused answers from the Department of the Environment. One states that waste and reprocessed material will be placed in the dumps, and another states that they will not be, yet the answers were only six weeks apart. The two problems are interconnected.

The Select Committee's report is so good that it certainly should have been considered before any special development order on nuclear dumping sites is laid. It would be unforgivable to put the SDO first. Yet the Government are, in effect, doing just that. This is an inadequate half-baked reply to the report. We should be dealing with the report as a whole today, not merely with the little bits to which the Government have chosen to reply. The report hangs together as a whole and presents a considered new approach to the Government's strategy.

The Government, by replying to the report in bits, are changing their justifications for their nuclear waste programme, which is to continue. They are more apologetic about it, but it must continue. They make sympathetic noises about Chernobyl but they are to soldier on with their commitment as if nothing had happened.

The Government's reply deals with only 13 of the 43 recommendations, and three of those recommendations are dealt with by half-baked responses, such as that "serious consideration should be given" to the matter. Only one recommendation has been accepted: to exclude intermediate-level waste from trench dumpings. The Government have ignored the recommendations on deep geological disposal, on dose limitations for the public, which I would have thought was central to the location and nature of the dumps, on reprocessing, on institutional responsibility, on co-ordination, on transport, on research and development and on the public.

To ignore all that is to produce a silly, shabby strategy which does not interfere with the Government's onward rush to nuclear dumping. It has led to an inadequate reply, and a messy debate tonight, because we have been mixing Chernobyl and Killingholme, CND and questions about the Select Committee's report, as if they were all one great glorious mess. The Government, backed by a three-line Whip, will refuse to change and smuggle through their rejection of what the Select Committee recommends them to do. The Government have treated the Select Committee with contempt. Their real concern is to get on with the special development order.

Mr. Michael Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman comment on the rumour, and seek reassurance from the Government Front Bench, that that SDO may be laid within hours?

Mr. Mitchell: I hope that that is not so, and that the Front Bench will assure us that it is not so. It would be a dirty trick of the first magnitude to follow this inadequate debate with an SDO. The Select Committee report has knocked away the intellectual basis of the Government's policy, yet the Government persevere with their policy.

As soon as the SDO is laid, blight will begin on the four areas affected. The mere mention of the SDO means blight in terms of development, house prices and prospects, which will continue throughout the long period of research and examination until the eventual decision. That blight will be foisted on those areas without proper consultation, against the wishes of the inhabitants, and without any intellectual justification.

The Government are not doing several things mentioned in the report. It said that the Department of the Environment must be able to demonstrate to the public that the sites were selected logically and systematically. The Government will not tell us whether that is so, because they will not tell us the basis for the selection. How can local authorities object to the selection when they do not know its basis? How can they argue in those circumstances?

The report states that people need to know that the choice of their area is not simply the result of some quirk or quite extraneous factor, such as site ownership. Yet the choice is based on site ownership. It is convenient that either the Government or a NIREX partner owns all four sites. That is why South Killingholme has been picked. It is not suitable in any other way than that it is convenient for the Government because they burnt their fingers with ICI on Teeside and do not want to be in that situation again. The Minister admitted that that was the case in his presentation of the NIREX letter to the House.

The report says that the Department should shortlist, but it will not do so. It prefers to accept that work from NIREX. The report says that the Department should not go for the cheap option, but it is doing so. This is a cheap and nasty option, which is used in very few other countries. Are Sweden, Germany and other countries less immune to radiation than we are? Why have so many other countries refused to go for the option which the Department is trying to foist on us—a most dangerous option?

The report says that alpha emitters should be excluded from the waste. The Department says that there will be "very small" quantities of alpha emitters, of toxic wastes and of trace elements. It is not observing what the report wants. In other words, the Department of the Environment, in its reply to the Select Committee on the Environment, is abandoning its responsibility to protect the environment and serve the people who live in that environment. It is acting as if it were the political arm of NIREX, not a Department with responsibility for people and the environment. It has a higher destiny, role and responsibility than that.

There have been massive evasions and sudden changes in the basis of the dumping programme. The exclusion of intermediate-level wastes shows that the Department has not even thought the business through before starting the decision-making process. My constituency and those of other hon. Members where dumping is threatened get no benefit from the nuclear programme. I know that some hon. Members have said that these areas will get nuclear power, but so will London, and it is not argued that the dump should be placed in London, which uses so much of the power. No one has asked to be blighted in this way. Ministers simply want to get something—anything—decided.

What has been done in the nuclear dumping programme is foolish, unjustifiable and unforgiveable. It will not be forgiven, and it certainly will not be accepted.

8.53 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): There is one consolation in speaking towards the end of the debate—one can look over the labyrinth of the hours and meditate. One finds that the abolitionists have been at work. Some wish for the destruction of THORP—the thermal oxide reprocessing plant—at Sellafield, and of the nuclear fuel cycle. BNFL has secured overseas contracts worth £2·5 billion, all of which would be liable to be lost. Much of the cost of THORP has been paid for by the customers, and there are 50,000 jobs involved in BNFL investment, all of which will go by the board.

Some questions should be raised. We are likely to approach the end of the century with an incomplete electricity capacity. At the moment, we have 9,029 megawatts of nuclear capacity, and replacement is required not merely for the de-commissioning of the Magnox reactors in the 1990s but for the retirement of certain coal-fired power stations, and for the expansion of demand. I cannot see, with the long lead time involved —eight years or more—that the construction of suitable capacity by 2000 AD can be achieved. The Minister will have to work that out himself.

This has been a debate on many topics, and I know that the special development orders will come later. I hope that many of our remarks will be fully debated in about a week's time.

The Chernobyl reactors have serious defects and the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee has given an analysis to its members of what caused the trouble in the one that exploded. How can we incriminate an industry in the United Kingdom upon the chance destruction of one Russian reactor, when some 370 reactors are operating in 25 countries and have been performing reasonably well over the past 30 years? The nuclear industry is under the shadow of political paralysis. A serious industry has become a plaything of political expediency. Confidence must be rebuilt, but not destroyed on the evidence of a single example. That would be like people saying that, because one house has burnt down, there will be devastation across the country. That is not the case.

If we have a nuclear industry, we must do something about it. The economics of necessity projected France into the nuclear age, and political expediency has bequeathed lost opportunities to the United Kingdom. The commercial reactors were first commissioned in the United Kingdom in 1962, and in France in 1965, but 24 years later, of total electricity, some 65 per cent. is generated by nuclear power in France and only 20 per cent. in the United Kingdom. For Belgium the figure is 60 per cent., for Sweden 43 per cent. and for Scotland—where power is cheaper than in England—some 40 per cent.

The total number of reactors worldwide is 374, plus another 150 under construction. Are we going to say that, because of an accident in one Russian reactor, of a type that we do not accept in the West, that had broken all the rules in the books—rules that we in the West do not break because we realise that precautions have to be taken —we have committed such a grave error?

I felt that the report of the Select Committee on the Environment would have been more balanced, and less one-sided, if it had been put together with the Select Committee on Energy. Perhaps there is no precedent for this, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy may have something to say. My right hon. Friend

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

has already made a useful concession in that low-level waste only is to be included in the chosen of these optional sites. It will be recollected that Bedfordshire asked for consideration of sites additional to that at Elstow. There are now four sites, so why are some hon. Members against all four of them?

The four sites must be compared on their merits. One option may be accepted, or all four may be rejected. The acceptable site, in judgment, is likely to be on the coast or on property owned by the Ministry of Defence, property that may be remote from the population centres, and therefore more acceptable than a site close to a population centre, as in Bedford. The report on the best practicable environmental options from the Department of the Environment says:

"It must therefore be concluded that near-surface disposal is the BPEO for over 80 per cent. by volume of all the waste considered."

I hope that the House will consider that point, even though part of the waste has been eliminated.

Hon. Members should bear in mind that more than 50 per cent. of the waste comes from the nuclear industry but from hospitals, industrial establishments, and so on. I hope that they will bear in mind also that, because of the strict rules which have been laid down, the risk of a fatality occurring in the nuclear industry is one in 1 million, compared with the risk at work of one in 40,000 and the risk from an accident in the home of one in 20,000.

We must be constructive if we are to have any sort of nuclear policy in the United Kingdom. It is not much good destroying everything in sight and hoping that we can create another industry out of the ashes. We have been told that there are alternative energy sources—that we could utilise that waste in the sea, but we do not know how to do that and that windmills could dot the countryside, like our population, but we do not know whether that approach will succeed in meeting United Kingdom requirements.

All over the globe nuclear power stations operate safely and there is no reason to suppose at this stage that great difficulties will arise anywhere, except perhaps in the Soviet Union. There was not a single death in the Three Mile Island incident in the United States. We should consider the number of miners in the pits and the numbers who have tried to extract black oil from the North sea who have been killed.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Trevor Skeet: No, Sir. I have only a short time to speak and I must bear in mind my colleagues' requirements.

By considering the matter in a balanced way and taking the positive approach, one sees the nuclear industry in an entirely different light. Let us have wisdom, not folly.

9 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Labour's amendment calls for a safer industry, and I wholeheartedly agree. I am conscious of the fact that in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and in my constituency 22,500 people are either directly or indirectly dependent on the nuclear industry. I say to those of my hon. Friends who call for the industry's closure that putting those people on the dole, over the space of a couple of years, would have a catastrophic effect. West Cumberland could not support such unemployment, and no hon. Member has the right to impose so many redundancies on my constituents.

We in west Cumberland have been led to believe that our economy was to be built on the basis of a civil nuclear programme. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made crucial decisions under a Labour Government, which included ordering two power stations. He made an even more crucial decision to develop a reprocessing plant in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland. In the past seven years, that £1·4 billion project has transformed west Cumberland's infrastructure and industrial development.

Only last week in my constituency I attended the opening of a factory which is devoted to the development of nuclear power. About 40 per cent. of its orders come from just one project, THORP. That is the real world in which we must live. It is unreasonable for any Government to lay out a pattern of industrial development in constituencies such as mine and Copeland, and then, because of a series of incidents at Sellafield, which arose only because of management's incompetence, and because of a stupid series of decisions in the Soviet Union, which lead to the construction of the RBMK plant—which everyone now says is unsafe—seven years later place a huge question mark over the future of employment in west Cumberland.

The recommendation of some to close the reprocessing plant at Sellafield is out. We cannot proceed on that basis. The industry itself has recognised that it is necessary to tighten up. Over the years I have seen massive investment in the nuclear power industry in west Cumberland to reduce discharges. About £450 million has been invested in three plants which are now coming on stream. By 1991, a £150 million investment will be in place in the Floc precipitation plant, which will dramatically reduce discharges. Alpha emitters will drop from 5,000 curies a year in 1973 to 20 a year by 1991. Beta emitters will drop from 200,000 in 1973 to 8,000 in 1991. This will make it one of the safest civil nuclear processing plants in the world. It is on that basis that I say to the House that we should be very careful when we consider the recommendations that are being made in some quarters. The problem is that people do not realise, understand or recognise the massive investment that is taking place to reduce the level of discharge from the nuclear industry.

I want to comment on the confused debate that takes place about the nuclear industry. The confusion that has arisen from statements that have been made by Ministers, the industry and lobbies outside over the years has led to a series of errors in the way in which people in responsible positions present their case. Too often, those errors have led to lies that have been propagated in all quarters. Too often the lie, in turn, has been manipulated to become the propaganda of the day. The problem is that the industry is riddled with misrepresentations and it is very hard to know where to start to re-establish the truth.

I have been to meetings where I have heard things said which I know have been untrue. When I have challenged them, I have been howled down by people who insist on living by the misrepresentation. In that climate of hysteria it is impossible to get over a decent and reasonable argument about the industry. I have even gone to meetings

where I have misrepresented the facts, not deliberately, but because I have been misled by people whom I regarded as responsible authorities.

There was the statement by the Energy Minister in 1983, which was referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield. When the Minister was asked whether there was a connection between the Central Electricity Generating Board's nuclear power station and the manufacture of nuclear weapons, he said:

"There is no such connection. No plutonium produced in any of the CEGB's nuclear power stations has ever been used for military purposes in this country, and there are no plans to use it thus in the future. Further, no plutonium from the CEGB nuclear programme has ever been exported for use in weapons." —[*Official Report*, 4 February 1983; Vol. 36, c. *206*.]

We now know that that is not true. I have been telling people that that is the truth. How can we, who actually believe in the industry, be credible when we accept statements from the Minister at the Dispatch Box in good faith which turn out to be untrue in the course of inquiry, in this case the Sizewell inquiry?

When Lord Marshall was asked during the television programme "TV Eye" whether the plutonium had been used for military purposes, he replied:

"I don't know what it was used for, but it has gone into the military stockpile. There is no secret about that."

I received an indignant letter the other day from a constituent who cannot understand why we are so inconsistent. He said:

"I want to draw your attention to the article in 'Sanity' about the diversion to the military stockpile of plutonium produced in the CEGB civil reactors. I am outraged that in order to support its case for building a second reactor at Sizewell the CEGB's chief witness, John Baker, committed perjury, at least, if, as I presume, his evidence was on oath or affirmation. I feel this is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions."

He went on to talk about his further outrage at the fact that "the Report by the Inspector of the Sizewell Public Inquiry is bound to consider only evidence there presented."

He pleaded with me to raise this matter in the House, and I am doing so.

There are many people in my constituency who feel as strongly as that. They want to know why the case is being misrepresented in this way. I appeal to the Secretary of State. We want an open, honest and honourable regime, where all the facts are made available. It is only in that climate that we can win the argument. I say to the Secretary of State that unless that climate is created in the United Kingdom, we shall never win that argument, and in the end we shall lose the industry.

9.9 pm

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): This debate takes place in the shadow of the Chernobyl disaster. However, in the few remaining minutes available, I should like to try to broaden it out into a consideration of whether we should continue with our nuclear programme, and look at the matter on a world basis.

I have been disappointed by some of the parochialism in the contributions to the debate, particularly by the Labour party, which used to be the party of internationalism. The supply and demand for energy in this country is only a small part of the global picture. There is little doubt that the population of the world will more than double some time in the next century before it finally stabilises. The energy requirements of the developing world will increase even faster than that. The economic growth that those countries will need to feed themselves and provide themselves with the basic necessities will require energy.

Most of the responsible studies that I have seen suppose that the global demand for energy will more than double in the next 25 years, even with the most optimistic projections on conservation. I do not see, and I have not heard during the debate, how we can get through the next 25 years without nuclear energy.

Hon. Members have said that coal will play a major part. It is true that the same studies suppose that part of the gap will be closed by the additional production and use of coal, but can we continue to plunder the earth of its fossil fuels? Apart from anything else, coal, oil and gas create their own pollution. We have heard about acid rain and the ash produced by coal-fired power stations. We have heard how the combustion of fossil fuels uses up oxygen and produces carbon dioxide. We have heard about the possible greenhouse effect, with the heating up of the planet and the consequential melting of the polar ice caps. I wish that some of the enthusiasts for the coal industry would give equal attention to some of the long-term effects of the industry that they so enthusiastically champion.

Perhaps this is the main point. Fossil fuels are exhaustible. Will we pass on to future generations an earth that has been stripped of its easily accessible fossil fuels; an earth with a teaming population with a voracious appetite for energy; an earth where we have denied people the technical means to produce the energy that they require?

That is why I support nuclear energy. It behoves the advanced industrial countries to make use of that form of power so that we can leave the fossil fuels to the less developed, poorer nations. It is not that nuclear energy is a magic solution. To me, it has always represented an opportunity, to be controlled, managed and harnessed. Of course there are risks, but some are very small. The routine, normal discharges from the nuclear power industry in this country contribute much less than 1 per cent. to the normal background radiation to which every one of us is exposed every day of our lives. That is certainly a great deal less damaging to health, and in every other way, than most other forms of industrial pollution.

I was a little nervous to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment suggest that every untoward radiological emission from the nuclear power industry should be reported and published. Does he really mean every untoward unauthorised emission? If so, he must include the coal industry. As we all know, there is a great deal of uranium ore in coal, which comes out by way of ash. If, during the normal operation of a coal-fired power station, the dust suppressors or effluent scrubbers are not working, presumably on a day-to-day basis there is a steep rise in the amount of radiation coming out of the power station. Is the Secretary of State going to put such a requirement on that industry? I would like a response on that from my right hon. Friend or from any other hon. Member who believes that the nuclear industry is unique in that respect.

Of course routine emissions should be further reduced, but if we are rational, we realise that it is better, if we are interested in saving lives, to concentrate on the many other sources of avoidable accidents caused by cars, aeroplanes and dams.

[Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory]

The nuclear industry in this country is spending millions of pounds on reducing the number of cancer deaths resulting from emissions from the industry from two deaths a year to one death. That money would be better spent on finding a cure for cancer, because hundreds of thousands of people all over the world would be saved.

My main concern—I am sure it is the main concern of the population—is not about routine emissions, but about the possibility of a major disaster. Almost the worst possible kind of disaster happened at Chernobyl. That was worse than the incident at Three Mile Island, where the Kemeny report showed that no one was killed as a result of the accident. We do not know the whole story about Chernobyl, but I hope that we do learn the facts. I would guess that the final death toll from the long-term cancer effects of the Chernobyl disaster will be far less than the 2,000 people who died at Bhopal in India. I do not think that we should close down the world's chemical industry because of the Bhopal disaster; equally, I do not think that we should seriously contemplate closing down the world's nuclear industry because of one accident in a badly designed reactor in the Soviet Union.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), in a brave speech, gave certain assurances about what a future Labour Government might do. In passing, he said that none of Britain's nuclear power stations was ordered by a Conservative Government. The corollary of that is, of course, that they were all ordered by a Labour Government. It is strange that Opposition Members have so dramatically shifted their position. If we are in a mess out of which we must get, it is a mess which the Opposition have created.

It is startling that the Opposition should flatly turn down the possibility of a programme of PWR reactors before the Sizewell report has been published. The Labour party is always keen to have commissions, reports and inquiries. However, it has turned down any recommendations that the Sizewell report might make, even before the scientific evidence has been sifted and published.

Of course, there are lessons for the United Kingdom to learn. The nuclear industry has the most to gain from maximum disclosure. It is my experience that the more people know about the industry, the more willing they are to replace emotion and suspicion with a rational assessment of the risks. There is a need for clear, timely and acceptable information of a technical nature and of a more simple kind that the man in the street can understand. If that means organisational changes at Government level, so be it.

When submitting parliamentary questions about the nuclear industry, I have found that they tend to be shifted and shunted around between the Department of Energy, the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. We must know who is responsible for what and who will publish the information.

The nuclear industry has the most to gain from being open and accessible. It is heartening that 180,000 people annually visit Britain's nuclear power stations and Sellafield. That is not enough. In France, 500,000 people visit nuclear power plants. As a result, it would seem that 60 per cent. of French people are in favour of their nuclear programme. Another factor may be that electricity in France is 20 per cent. cheaper than in Britain.

There are, of course, still technical, political and social hurdles to be cleared if we are to have a successful and continuing nuclear power programme. It is a paradox that although a great deal is known about the physics of radiation and the engineering aspects of radioactivity and although radiation is easy to detect and measure, the public still consider it to be mysterious.

We should not fall into the trap of leaving everything to the experts. The industry must create a partnership with the public and encourage maximum discussion. Some hon. Members have their own private reasons and interests for other ways of producing energy. Some are told what to say, and perhaps even what to think, by their trade union sponsors. But the rest of us have a duty to try to explain to the public the facts behind the industry. I endorse everything that has been said this evening about the need for maximum disclosure.

I end on a note of caution. In discussing this matter there is a danger that we will shift attention from what I consider to be the main threat to mankind — the proliferation of nuclear weapons. There is no direct correlation between a civil nuclear programme and a military nuclear programme. The fact that a country may possess a civil reactor does not enable it to produce weapons-grade plutonium. Similarly, the fact that a country does not possess a civil reactor does not, I am afraid, preclude it from obtaining enriched uranium or plutonium from a research reactor which is separate and distinct from any civil programme. That is the main danger.

We should be turning our attention to how we can encourage international inspection and increase the number of signatories to the non-proliferation treaty of 1968. Far too much concentration on the dangers of civil nuclear power leads to such facts being overlooked.

This has been a helpful debate, but we should never forget that the legacy that we must bequeath to the people is not one of an earth stripped of its fossil fuels. That would be far more dangerous than bequeathing to them the shorter term problem of the disposal of nuclear waste.

9.21 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): The magnitude of the disaster at Chernobyl has focused public attention on the issue of nuclear power. Therefore, it is right that the debate has ranged across the whole issue of Britain's nuclear power programme—the reprocessing of waste and every other aspect. It would not be possible to separate the issues of radioactive waste disposal from the power programme that creates that waste.

Public perception of nuclear power has been changing over the past few years. The Sizewell B inquiry and the publicity over Sellafield have heightened public awareness. The disaster at Chernobyl has further increased public fears. That has been underlined by many hon. Members on both sides of the House in what has been an important debate this evening.

Opinion polls show that increasing numbers of people oppose any further development of nuclear power, and nothing that the Government have done or said has allayed those fears.

The Secretary of State lost no time in making his position clear in an article in the *Daily Telegraph* on Friday 2 May. He and his colleagues have launched a great deal of criticism at the Soviet Union for its lack of openness. He said:

"there would have been no disaster at Chernobyl had the Soviet Union followed the procedures of the democracies."

His predecessor, the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), described the disaster as

"the failures of this furtive, secretive, over-centralised and inefficient society".

The Prime Minister joined in to emphasise Britain's openness compared with the secretive approach of the Soviet Union. Yet the self-same obsession with secrecy has dominated Britain's nuclear industry.

I can describe that attitude no better than the *Financial Times* did yesterday when it said that

"secrecy, suppression, denial, evasion, subterfuge . . . arrogance, and bland reassurance"

have been the watchwords for the conduct of the nuclear industry in Britain. The reasons for that can only be, again as the *Financial Times* states, that the nuclear power industry is tied up with, and the by-product of, nuclear weapons.

The Secretary of State for Energy has declared that he will introduce a policy of total openness. He is reported as saying:

"I desire to have no secrecy of any description, and the way to get public confidence is to make sure there is no secrecy."

He does not explain how this would be achieved other than by changing the highly technical language which the industry uses.

The undoubted links between civil and military nuclear power will make the right hon. Gentleman's task even more difficult. With Labour's policy of decommissioning Polaris and ending the Trident programme, the production of weapons grade material will be halted. The military need for secrecy will be vastly reduced and full public accountability can be achieved.

Meanwhile, will the Government take meaningful steps towards total openness by repealing the relevant provisions of the Official Secrets Act 1911? In the new spirit of international co-operation on civil nuclear power, perhaps the Secretary of State will tell the House whether he is prepared to grant full access to Euratom, the EEC's nuclear agency—access that has been under discussion since he was responsible for energy in a previous Tory Administration?

The Secretary of State has repeated several times that the accident at Chernobyl could not happen here. We know that the mechanics are different. The Magnox reactors share one design weakness which became evident at Chernobyl—there is no secondary containment to trap emissions in the event of an explosion rupturing the pressure vessel. Mr. Eddie Ryder, chief inspector of nuclear installations has said that the reactors

"probably would not be licensed today."

There are also similarities between the RMBK and the American PWR. Both depend upon a rapid and regular flow of water under high pressure to prevent overheating. An accident in a similar reactor led to the incident at Three Mile Island. In that incident, children and pregnant women within a five-mile radius were evacuated and thousands more left of their own accord. What is important is that the presidential commission that investigated the accident concluded that the fundamental cause was operator error. Nothing can be done to prevent human error, and nothing can compensate for it.

Since the inception of nuclear power, there has been a succession of worldwide accidents — none of them as dramatic or serious as Chernobyl. Senator John Glenn has quoted from a classified United States document that there have been 151 significant nuclear safety incidents in the past 15 years. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) referred to this.

That statement refutes the claim made by the right hon. Member for Guildford in an article in the *Sunday Express* on 4 May that, all around the globe, nuclear power stations are being run without harm or pollution. The Government are resting on their laurels when they say that the British nuclear industry's safety record is second to none.

The Secretary of State should have made a statement to Parliament regarding the recent incident at Dungeness. Why, in the new spirit of openness, was that not done? I do not wish to add to public anxiety or to scaremonger, but the people wish to know about this issue. The Government's complacency begs many questions the answers to which the House and the public are entitled to know. Most disturbing is the reported weakness of the nuclear installations inspectorate.

Last September, *The Times* reported that there were serious staff shortages at the nuclear installations inspectorate. At the end of 1985, *The Times* stated that more than 30 per cent. of the inspectorate staff would be nearing retirement age, but that a recruitment drive during the previous three years had produced only just more than a dozen members of staff and that it took at least two years to train inspectors. The chief inspector at the time said that the Sizewell inquiry had absorbed 25 per cent. of the inspectorate's time, leaving other work to be delayed or left undone.

The NII told the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations that reviewing the safety of Britain's Magnox and AGR stations was straining staff and resources. It complained that it could not pay

"the desired amount of attention to industrial safety".

We are now told that none of the inspections of the Magnox stations is complete, and that there may be delays in the safety assessment of AGRs. The Secretary of State seems to find that funny, but the public are extremely concerned about the safety of the nuclear industry. They want to know why the inspectorate has been reduced and why there are insufficient people in that industry. The bland reassurances given by an Energy Minister in the House last year are not sufficient. The House must know what steps the Government are taking to ensure that the NII is adequately staffed to meet the inspectorate's great and increasing workload.

Ministers' attempts to convince Britain that all is well with nuclear power have failed, so what arguments are left? A major plank in the Government's attempt to sell nuclear power to the British people is that of cheaper electricity, yet the Department of Energy has admitted that modern coal-fired stations are cheaper to run than Magnox reactors. Recently, we have heard a lot from the Secretary of State about the benefits of cheap electricity to the French as a result of their nuclear programme, but the reality of the French electricity industry is somewhat different.

Many people have argued that the price France is offering the United Kingdom amounts to a loss leader in an attempt to achieve at least some return on nuclear plant that would otherwise stand idle. The French electricity industry has lost money for the past two years, and its debt has soared to 200 billion francs. That has been criticised as "excessive" by the French watchdog body, which went on to state that the industry had made its investments

"in the most inappropriate manner".

[Mr. Stanley Orme]

Financial analysts have predicted that, because of that debt burden, the French electricity industry will be forced to increase its tariffs. So much for the long-term benefits of a massive nuclear power programme.

But even if the Secretary of State's belief that nuclear power will reduce electricity costs has some foundation, the British people now say that the benefit is not worth the risks involved. Yet the Government are not even prepared to pause and take stock of the nuclear power programme. Mr. Eddie Ryder, the chief nuclear inspector, forecast that there would be a period of reflection before further decisions were taken about the future of Britain's nuclear power programme. However, he has been proved wrong, because the Government have not taken a period of reflection. He apparently also forecast that the Government's emphasis would be on persuading the public that the risk of a serious accident was so remote that it was judged acceptable when set against the benefits of nuclear power. If that is the case, the public relations exercise is clearly not working.

The Government are so wholeheartedly committed to expanding their nuclear programme that other areas of research and development have become the poor relations. Nuclear research continues to expand, with over £300 million allocated annually from a variety of sources, compared with just £14 million for renewable, or benign, energy sources. As the Energy Committee stated in its report entitled, "Energy Research, Development and Demonstration in the United Kingdom":

"when the treatment of different aspects of energy R & D is so glaringly inconsistent, it is difficult to be satisfied that a sensible balance of priorities has been arrived at."

Renewables are an investment for the future. We accept that they will form only a percentage of supply, but even the CEGB admitted in evidence to the Sizewell B inquiry that it could accept a contribution of up to 20 per cent. from a mix of renewable resources without operational problems. That is far from a "marginal" contribution. By the end of the decade, the question of renewable sources will have become a serious issue. In consequence, we may find that that will be very important.

When the Gas Bill was in Committee, we attempted to induce the Government to oblige the British Gas Corporation to take responsibility for energy conservation. Once again, their commitment to the fifth fuel proved to be shabby as they totally rejected that possibility. Equally shabby is the Government's commitment to the coal industry. We have supplies of coal to last for hundreds of years; we have the technology to ensure that coal-fired power stations are environmentally acceptable; and we have the technology to turn coal into oil and gas. Despite that, the coal industry is being run down by the Government.

We must have an energy policy based on coal, using the most up-to-date technology. Work on pressurised fluidised bed combustion must be accelerated. There must be a major programme to install desulphurisaton processes in existing coal and oil-fired power stations which, while creating a large number of jobs, would also reduce acid rain emissions dramatically.

It is clear that the Government lack the will to develop new, safe and clean ways of providing Britain with sources of energy. They also lack any coherent approach to Britain's energy needs. We believe that the country's dependence on nuclear power must be reduced, and that our future lies predominantly with the use of coal as its major source of energy and as part of a planned national energy policy.

We would ensure that full reviews were carried out of the Magnox stations and that those that had reached the end of their useful design life were decommissioned and phased out. Nuclear power cannot be halted tomorrow, so we would have a planned reduction in Britain's dependence on nuclear power. Any replacement power station capacity will be provided by constructing new coal-fired power stations, using all the latest technology. The costs involved in this must be met in order to safeguard people's welfare and the environment. We remain totally opposed to the construction of all PWR power stations, at Sizewell or anywhere else in Britain. We will not consider the introduction of the fast reactor.

Following the Chernobyl disaster, which the world has shared, there should be no question but that the Government must pause in any expansion of the nuclear power programme. As a matter of urgency, the Government must ensure that any safety reviews of Magnox stations that have been completed are published, that those still outstanding are accelerated, and that the nuclear installations inspectorate is strengthened. They must halt the production of weapons-grade material, from whatever source.

The Government should accept the recommendation of the Select Committee on the Environment for an urgent economic re-appraisal of the THORP at Sellafield, but we recognise that Sellafield will be necessary when decommissioning takes place. The Government maintain that jobs will be lost if they do not go ahead with the PWR. Manufacturing industry disagrees. The Government have the facility to construct a 900 MW coal-fired station, with potential for export demand, which would ensure that jobs were safeguarded.

The Government must end the uncertainty and the speculation about the construction of the PWR. They should call in Sir Frank Layfield and Lord Marshall and tell them that the plans to build a PWR in Britain will not go ahead. That is what the Labour party stands for, and what we advocate tonight.

9.38 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): I will want later to compare the speech of the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) with the opening speech made by the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), because there were considerable differences between the speeches.

In the debate there have been a whole range of differing views on both sides of the House. A number of my hon. Friends who represent constituencies where the storage of nuclear waste is being considered as a possibility understandably made vigorous and lively speeches suggesting various options to the system that is currently proposed.

It is interesting that the hon. Members for Copeland, for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Tottenham (Mr. Atkinson) have constituencies or trade unions that are closely connected with the nuclear industry. With their knowledge and experience, all three were positive in their approach to the nuclear industry—as positive as were the last Labour Government.

In fairness to the last Labour Government, although we have been criticised by the Opposition Front Bench for our failure to go ahead with any form of nuclear reactor in the last seven years, which is a perfectly reasonable criticism, we cannot make the same criticism of the last Labour Government. It was that Labour Government who first embarked upon one particular form of reactor that they later decided to abandon. They then gave the order for two further AGR power stations now in the course of construction and moving towards completion. They opened the view that we should consider carefully the possibility of a PWR, and gave the go-ahead for the major investment programme of BNFL. I must confess, therefore, that in their contribution to the nuclear programme of the country the Labour Government of that era—with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) playing a distinguished role in it — were very positive.

One must ask whether the Labour party now uses the argument: as we are self-sufficient in energy, why bother with nuclear energy? Why was it in that period, when we were fast moving towards self-sufficiency in energy, that the Labour Government decided objectively, reasonably and obviously after careful consideration that that was the right course to pursue?

In the debate, therefore, we have seen a recognition of the deep anxiety about the events that have taken place in the Soviet Union. As one future benefit of those events, it now appears likely that the Soviet Union will move to a greater sense of international collaboration on these matters than hitherto. I am not surprised at that. In the talks that I had in Moscow with the new personalities in the Government led by Mr. Gorbachev, those new personalities were very aware that their ambitious plans for the growth of the economy of the Soviet Union much depended upon a massive growth in the energy supplies that the Soviet Union was able to produce.

Unlike the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union has the benefits of massive coal resources and of oil and gas. It is a country that one can argue is self-sufficient in energy without nuclear energy. However, the Soviet Government have objectively decided that, in the massive expansion of energy production that they want between now and the end of the century, the fastest area of production required is in nuclear energy. The Soviet Government have done this for a variety of reasons, including what they consider is the best means of taking energy to the various parts of the Soviet Union and the general efficiency of that method. They were anxious to see the know-how of the West in terms of safety, and the disposal of nuclear waste is a matter on which they wish to collaborate and towards which they wish to work.

I am pleased to say that the Soviet Union has opened its information to the International Atomic Energy Agency after the initial clampdown. The leading figures in the agency have visited the site. They communicated with me today to tell me that the Soviet Union has agreed to give the fullest possible report on the accident and all the lessons to be learnt from it. A conference will be organised by the agency—it hopes that it will take place in June—during which the Soviet Union will present all the facts of which it is aware.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said that he has been in favour of the civil use of nuclear energy and considers that international collaboration is an important element, which is the view that was taken at the Tokyo summit. Eastern European countries were critical of the lack of immediate information that was available from the Soviet Union, and I hope that as a result of the incident we can substantially improve international collaboration.

Criticism has been expressed from the Opposition Front Bench about the manner in which information was provided during the potential and actual event of radiation in Britain. Anyone who considers objectively the way in which Ministers concerned with nuclear energy quickly took the monitoring action that was necessary and the publishing of that material will accept that the Government need make no apology for their action. It was right that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, with his specific responsibilities, led the Government team that was responsible for the monitoring. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has knowledge and knowhow of identifying radiation levels on land and in the sea, and it started its operations as soon as we had knowledge of the accident. The Health and Safety Executive and the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate joined in to ensure that all necessary measures were taken.

Unlike other countries, responsibilities for inspection are with a range of Departments, and we should reflect on the wisdom of this approach. It is right that environmental protection should be with the Department of the Environment, which should have responsibility for ensuring that standards are maintained. Land, sea or food pollution is a matter for the Department which has the expertise and independence to deal with the problem administratively. It is right that the Health and Safety Executive, which has considerable independence, should lay down standards for safety factors.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Walker: I shall not give way, because I agreed that the time allocated to the Front Bench replies should be reduced substantially. I think that in fairness the hon. Gentleman should allow me to continue.

It was suggested by the hon. Member for Copeland, when he opened the debate on behalf of the Opposition, that as soon as the report of the Select Committee on the Environment, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), was published, I issued a statement condemning it. That is untrue. I refused to make any comment on the report until the Government had prepared a proper reply.

Mr. Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend and I were involved together in work on environmental matters way back in the 1960s. I have immense respect and regard for his diligence and ability in these matters. He knows that shortly after receiving his report I had discussions with him about it and listened to the constructive case that is set out in the report.

Mr. Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend set out his views on compensation for those who bear the brunt of developments of the sort that we have been discussing this evening. My hon. Friend knows from his past ministerial experience that there are complications and difficulties. When one is dealing with straight compensation matters, one finds that, although something may be unfortunate, in its judgment, for the particular household concerned, it does not have a bearing on the valuation of the property.

[Mr. Walker]

If one considers the enormous development at Sellafield and the very large work force that is employed there—and likewise at Heathrow — the result has been an increase in property prices. NIREX has stated that it wants objectively to examine the contribution that it can make and I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Government will carefully consider any proposals that are made.

My hon. Friend also referred to the importance of adopting Rolls-Royce standards for the treatment of all forms of waste. I understand that point of view. My hon. Friend's report shows that he agrees that Rolls-Royce standards are very much a means of giving confidence to the public.

I had discussions with British Nuclear Fuels plc last week and I understand that it considers that there are ways in which it can improve considerably its performance.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Walker: Can I say—[HON. MEMBERS: "No. Give way."] It is important that the international energy scene should be put into context. My hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) referred to the international energy scene. What has been absent from this debate——

Mr. Roberts: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister refuses to give way. He is misleading the House and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Roberts: It is a matter for you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Walker: One of the factors that has been left out of this debate is a consideration of the international position.

Mr. Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Walker: Can I say—[HON. MEMBERS: "No. Give way."] That element has been absent from this Debate. Naturally we have considered the immediate effects of the incident in the Soviet Union and its impact upon public opinion. But can I say—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Anybody who studies future essential needs knows that of all forms of energy known to man, that which is most likely to be an absolute necessity in the 21st century is nuclear energy, provided that it can be safely produced and safely presented. Can I just say—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] It is estimated that by the year 2025 the world's population will have increased from 4·7 billion to 8 billion. On any estimate of nuclear and other forms of energy requirements, if we look at available fossil fuels it appears that, if we are to keep energy supplies at today's levels, by the year 2025, taking into account all the conservation measures that can be adopted, a ninefold increase in nuclear energy worldwide will be needed.

We have to contrast the two speeches that were made from the Opposition Front Bench. The hon. Member for Copeland said that it is essential to keep available the nuclear option. However, the right hon. Member for Salford, East said that this is the time to phase out the nuclear industry in this country. The Labour party must make it clear to the country whether or not it wishes to abolish the nuclear industry in this country. If it does, I hope that the right hon. Member for Salford, East will call together the shop stewards of the nuclear industry that he brought to my Department a few months ago to complain about the lack of expansion of the nuclear industry. I hope that he will say that now that there has been an incident in the Soviet Union, he has decided to phase out 100,000 jobs in the British nuclear industry. That is the policy that the right hon. Gentleman is pursuing, in sharp contrast with those who have a deep knowledge of the nuclear industry, such as the hon. Members for Copeland and for Tottenham.

The hon. Member for Tottenham raised an important aspect about Sizewell, PWRs and fast breeder reactors —it was the quality of engineering. As we all know, his union has made a great contribution to the nuclear industry, and considers that it is an industry of the future. The engineering industry believes that if we follow the suggestion of the Labour party that no decisions are made about the nuclear industry in the foreseeable future, as anyone connected with the industry knows, its existence in this country will disappear.

The Government have correctly decided to take great care before making any decisions on a nuclear reactor. The argument that the Government have been aggressively pro-nuclear is demolished by the manner in which we set up the Sizewell inquiry. It is remarkable that with an inquiry of that quality and duration, the Opposition have decided to ignore its findings even before they are published.

It is important to recognise that, of course, the Government would like the nuclear industry to succeed. We believe that of all the forms of energy known to man, nuclear energy is likely to be the front runner in the next century. However, it can be that only if it proves to be safe and if the engineering standards applied to it are of the highest quality. It is only on that basis that any democratic Government can pursue nuclear energy. This Government, more than any post-war Government, have taken the most enormous care to give every consideration to the quality of decision taking. Therefore, we await the Sizewell inquiry report, which is expected in September. We will study what comes before the International Atomic Energy Agency as a result of what has happened in the Soviet Union. We will then carefully discuss and debate the potentiality of nuclear energy in the years to come.

I believe and hope that we can secure standards of safety and environmental quality that will make that form of energy available to mankind. I hasten to add that if we fail in that task, we must not underestimate the damage that will be done to living standards throughout the world as the fossil sources of energy decline and there is no alternative form of energy. The hon. Member for Workington was correct to recognise that, in reality, it is the developing Third world countries, with the improving living standards of people now devoid of energy, that are dependent upon the success of nuclear energy.

Trying to achieve that success, in standards of environmental quality, total safety and good engineering skills, is the objective of the Government. One of my hon. Friends pleaded that one cannot pursue support for nuclear energy, if, at that time, public opinion is not with one. That is the basis of democracy, and Governments can be defeated if public opinion is not behind them. If any Government failed to put forward the public's basic need for nuclear energy, they would be guilty of a wrongful act towards the future of western civilisation.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 205, Noes 349.

Division No. 175] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander

Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 340, Noes 205.

Division No. 176] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick

Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'hea'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*

Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hickmet, Richard
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the steps taken by the Government to keep the House and the public informed of the consequences for the United Kingdom of the accident at the nuclear plant at Chernobyl in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; endorses the Government's commitment to the safety of the complete nuclear fuel cycle in the United Kingdom; and in that context approves the Government's first stage response on 2nd May to the Environment Committee's report on radioactive waste (House of Commons Paper No. 191), setting out as it does the principles against which current proposals to dispose of low-level radioactive waste can be considered.

Hong Kong

10.29 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move,

That the draft Hong Kong (British Nationality) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 7th May, be approved.

The draft nationality order carries out arrangements which have been fully considered and debated over many months and it represents the culmination of a long period of careful work. It stems from the joint declaration with the Chinese Government, which, with the wholehearted approval of the House, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister signed in December 1984. It continued with the Hong Kong Act 1985, which again the House fully debated and approved. It led from there to our debate in January, when there was a full opportunity to consider the detailed arrangements which are now incorporated in the draft order. Equally full and detailed discussions have been held in Hong Kong.

It is right that the matter should have been dealt with in this careful way, because fair and comprehensive nationality arrangements are vital to the future of people in Hong Kong and to the successful carrying out of the agreement with the Chinese.

I shall not describe in detail the provisions of the order, because they are in the form that the House considered in January, apart from one or two drafting and minor technical amendments. It establishes those who, because of their connection with Hong Kong, will cease to be British dependent territories citizens in 1997, and it gives them the right to acquire British national (overseas) status —BN(O)—and the passport that goes with it. The order makes provisions also to guard against statelessness.

Our proposals in the order are fully consistent with our obligations under the joint declaration and properly exercise our powers under the Hong Kong Act. I think that this has been generally accepted in earlier debates in the House, as it has been in Hong Kong. Following their debate last December, however, the Hong Kong Legislative and Executive Councils made three points which have attracted support in the House and in another place. They were, first, that there should be an endorsement in British national (overseas) passports to show that the holder did not require a visa or entry certificate to visit the United Kingdom; secondly, that former service men in Hong Kong who fought in its interests during the second world war should be granted British citizenship; and, thirdly, that British dependent territories citizens in Hong Kong who were not ethnically Chinese, and who had not exercised their right to be British nationals (overseas), and who had no other form of nationality, should be granted British citizenship in 1997 rather than British overseas citizenship.

The Government agreed to consider each of those points fully. We have done so with great care over many months, listening to the many representations made. As a result, as the House will know from my announcement on 23 April, we have met two of the three requests.

First, for the British national overseas passport, we will place in each an endorsement which will read:

"In accordance with the United Kingdom immigration rules the holder of this passport does not require an entry certificate or visa to visit the United Kingdom."

An explanatory leaflet will be given to each passport holder, which will make it clear that we welcome visitors from Hong Kong and which will set out the holder's position under the present immigration rules. I am glad that this concession has been welcomed by the Unofficial Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils.

Secondly, we have also agreed to meet the concern for ex-service men. There are about 270, and of those, 60 or so are eligible to apply for registration as British citizens under section 4(5) of the British Nationality Act 1981. I am ready to consider sympathetically any applications from these ex-service men. To meet the needs of the others, I have agreed also that any of the 270 may be accepted here for settlement, together with their dependants. The Unofficial Members of the Legislative and Executive Councils have also welcomed these arrangements.

We considered long and hard the third request—that British citizenship should be granted to British dependent territories citizens who were not ethnically Chinese and who might risk statelessness after 1997. We accept fully our commitments to this community, and we intend to honour them in full, but we must also consider the implications of going as far as they have asked. We believe that such a step is not necessary to provide them with the proper measure of security they need, and that it would carry considerable implications in the years ahead which we could not responsibly ignore.

We have approached the problem with two firm principles in mind. The first is that no British dependent territories citizen should have any reason to fear becoming stateless in 1997; nor after 1997 should their children, or their grandchildren. The provision of British overseas citizenship for any who would otherwise be stateless because they have not taken up their right to be a British national (overseas), and the assurances of British overseas citizenship for the children and grandchildren of British dependent territories citizens, fully meet these commitments.

Our second principle is that we should ensure that people settled in Hong Kong can continue to have the right to live there. No form of British nationality can guarantee this after 1997. It has been secured, however, through the agreement with the Chinese. That guarantees rights of abode in Hong Kong for all non-ethnic Chinese who have made it their permanent home. The agreement is binding in international law and, to make it binding in local law, the provisions are to be written into a basic law governing the Hong Kong special administrative region.

Our proposals fully meet our commitments to provide all British dependent territories citizens in Hong Kong with the right to a home, with a clear form of nationality and with assurances for their children and grandchildren.

To go further and grant British citizenship in the way suggested, would take the problem out of the immediate context of Hong Kong and risk setting up pressures and uncertainties which could only have damaging and undesirable consequences elsewhere. We must remember that there are about two million British overseas citizens in various parts of the world, of whom about 800,000 have that as their only form of citizenship. We must think of the message which they might receive, and the doubts and uncertainties which would be raised, if we were to accept that British overseas citizenship was not adequate for some people in Hong Kong.

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

We must also take into account the sensible principle of the British Nationality Act, which the House approved in 1981, that British citizenship should reflect a person's close personal links with the United Kingdom. And, as British citizenship carries with it the right to come and settle in this country, we must think of our commitment to a fair and firm immigration policy. There are at present about 11,500 people in Hong Kong who in 1997 might seek to benefit under the statelessness provisions, and we do not know what might have affected the size of the commitment by then.

There are those who argue that, given the circumstances of Hong Kong, it would be prudent to grant these people British citizenship in case circumstances there were to change and they had to leave. If this were to be the case there would no doubt need to be a good deal of reconsideration and readjustment, but it is not sensible to go into the next 11 years planning for the worst, and we have no reason to do so.

I understand the concerns of this community, and that is why we have made it clear that if any British nationals were at any time to come under pressure to leave Hong Kong, we would expect the Government of the day to consider sympathetically their admission to the United Kingdom on a cases by case basis. Mr. John Swaine, the convenor of the Legislative Council's ad hoc group on the order, has been quoted as welcoming this as a strong moral commitment to this community. I am sure that he was right to do so.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Is the essence of the Minister's comments that he has rejected the third category of argument, even though it applies to a relatively small number of people, because of the relevance of the other, up to 2 million, elsewhere in the world?

Mr. Hurd: That is part of the argument. Of the 2 million, 800,000 have no other form of citizenship. If we were to take action which would devalue British overseas citizenship, it would have serious effects on them. That was one of the arguments. I have gone on to deploy another connected with immigration. I have gone beyond the point on which the hon. Gentleman was fastening to explain the case by case approach which any Government would have to adopt if the need arose. I was quoting the welcome for this undertaking which has been given by Mr. Swaine in Hong Kong.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Notwithstanding any commitment that might be made for the future, will the Minister recognise that the result of Government policy will be to give 10,000 people in Hong Kong a right of abode in Hong Kong without citizenship, or citizenship in the United Kingdom without right of abode? If the very least of the right hon. Gentleman's constituents came to see him at his surgery to complain about it, would he not do all in his power to fight against such a monstrous injustice? Why, therefore, is he condemning no fewer than 10,000 citizens in Hong Kong to such inadequacy in the future?

Mr. Hurd: I would fight against any injustice, but I would try to establish the facts in my own mind before doing so. Through the connection between the agreement with China and the contents of the order, we are providing a right of abode and British overseas citizenship to those who do not take out the BN(O) passport. For the reasons that I have given, if the hon. Gentleman had been listening, I believe that that provides the best assurance for a secure and confident future for the people of Hong Kong, including the 11,500 about whom the hon. Gentleman is particularly concerned. He does neither them nor Hong Kong any service by misinterpreting a matter which has been so carefully and strongly discussed and debated in the colony, where there is a growing understanding that the arrangement we have made is sensible.

There are already signs of continuing encouragement about the future of Hong Kong. The Joint Liaison Group continues to work well. It has made arrangements to ensure that after 1997 Hong Kong keeps its place in the world trading community, and it has also formally agreed the terms of the right of abode endorsement which I have just mentioned in the BN(O) passport.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): In writing to the Hong Kong Indian Association on 30 April, the Home Secretary said that the Government would have further discussions with the Government of China. Are the discussions which have already taken place the limit of such discussions, or does he expect to have further discussions?

Mr. Hurd: The discussions which have already taken place have led to the position which I am putting to the House. Nothing that I am saying now will contradict or come as a surprise to the Chinese Government. I have reported to the House on the link between the agreement and the discussions with the People's Republic of China and the order before the House.

Many of us have from our own experiences deep admiration and respect for Hong Kong. The Government have made a significant contribution to establishing and building up that confidence by carefully measured steps, not all easy to arrive at, but many of which have been considered and approved by the House. The nationality order represents another important step along the way. The arrangements that we have made for the ethnic minorities, as for all other British dependent territories citizens in Hong Kong, fully honour our commitments. They offer a sound and responsible basis for continued confidence and security in the future.

I believe that the order, as part of the series of measured steps, will serve the people of Hong Kong well. I commend it to the House.

10.44 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): This is the second occasion in recent months on which the House has debated the citizenship of Hong Kong consequent upon the transfer of that territory to China in 1997. May I repeat what many hon. Members and I said during our debate in January —that nothing that we say tonight should undermine our confidence in the future of Hong Kong after 1997, when it becomes part of China. Confidence is a delicate matter, and we owe it to the people of Hong Kong to encourage a state of confidence and optimism about the future. Those are not merely words; having visited Hong Kong last year, I believe that there are good chances of a successful and prosperous future for the people of Hong Kong after 1997.

We are debating the citizenship and status of those who are not ethnic Chinese and, therefore, not automatically

Chinese citizens and will not automatically have the ability to become Chinese citizens after 1997. It must be said that, after 1997, Hong Kong will be unique. I can think of no territory in the history of the British empire—or at the end of the British empire—that has been transferred to another country as Hong Kong will be transferred in about 11 years' time. That is why this is an especially difficult problem of citizenship which would not apply if Hong Kong became a completely independent territory, as so many parts of the British Commonwealth have become in the past 30 years.

As the Home Secretary said, in recent months, the Government have been pressed on three issues. He mentioned the endorsement in the passport. Of course, that is welcome for what it is worth, but we must be honest with ourselves and with the people of Hong Kong and say that that endorsement is simply a reiteration of the present position. It adds not one jot to the rights of the people of Hong Kong; it simply puts into their passports rights that they should have anyway. The people of Hong Kong have told us about their difficulties when they arrive at British airports as tourists or on business. The hassles to which they are subjected have given rise to the feeling that their passports should contain something to protect them.

There may be a change of heart at Heathrow airport, and the endorsement may give them protection, but the Home Secretary knows that the Hong Kong Government advise their citizens visiting Britain to obtain entry clearance certificates first to save themselves difficulties at the point of entry. I hope that the endorsement will have the effect that the Home Secretary claims, but let us be honest and admit to ourselves that it simply reiterates the present position.

The concession granted to former prisoners of war is welcome. We argued their case in the previous debate, and we are glad that the Government have acceded to our requests.

The ethnic minorities are unhappy about the Government's proposals, the more so as the Government revealed those proposals in answer to a parliamentary question a couple of weeks ago. The Home Secretary will be aware that the Council of Hong Kong Indian Organisations has lobbied hard and effectively to express its anxiety about the position of its members after 1997. The Home Secretary will be aware that the Legislative Council in Hong Kong made strong and clear recommendations.

There have been other representations. I received a telegram from Sir Roger Lobo, an eminent man of Portuguese origin in Hong Kong, from which I quote:

"The British Government's failure to consider minorities' case was bitterly disappointing to those non-ethnic Chinese Hong Kong citizens and this includes people of European ancestry who have lived here for generations. They feel betrayed."

He mentions the position of Portuguese people there and comments on Britain and Portugal celebrating the 600th anniversary of the treaty of Windsor, which was signed on 9 May 1386. He feels that the Government proposals leave most of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong with an uncertain future there. That is a powerful telegram. I am sure that the Home Secretary has received the same message sent directly to him at the Home Office.

We are talking about the nature of British responsibility for these people in Hong Kong. The Home Secretary has said that they will have a right of abode there as decided by the agreement with the Government of China. But, of course, giving them British overseas citizenship status in Hong Kong, albeit with the right of abode which is the subject of an international agreement, does not give those people in Hong Kong from the ethnic minorities equal and full citizenship with other people in Hong Kong. The Home Secretary knows, as we know, that British overseas citizenship is not citizenship in any true sense of the word. It is a term devised in the British Nationality Act 1981 to get us out of one of the embarrassing legacies of empire. It has now been applied with a difference to the situation in Hong Kong, the difference being that it will be able to be passed on for a couple of generations. The Home Secretary said that he had no wish to devalue British overseas citizenship. For the life of me, I cannot understand how something that has so little value can be devalued any further.

If I may turn to a particular point of substance and one to which the Home Secretary referred, in reply to a written question and, indeed, again today, the Home Secretary said:

"If, however, any British national were in the future to come under pressure to leave Hong Kong, we would expect the Government of the day to consider sympathetically the case for admission to the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. *148*.]

It is not being suggested that there would be obvious pressure for these people to leave Hong Kong. Surely the problem is rather this. Because they will not be full and equal citizens after 1997 with the majority of the people of Hong Kong, their position will be difficult. It may well become untenable while they are in Hong Kong.

If the Home Secretary used his words carefully, as we must assume that he did, he was giving only a very slight concession to people under pressure to leave, not people who find that, because of their unequal citizenship status, they are having an unhappy and miserable time in Hong Kong. I hope, like everybody, that it will not come to that. However, if it does, those people surely are entitled to greater safeguards.

Because there are fears to that effect, the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong have been arguing that they should be given some sort of assurance before 1997, not after that date. I do not know whether the Home Secretary has received a copy of the editorial of the *South China Morning Post* of Monday 12 May. Referring to the ethnic minorities of Hong Hong, it says:

"As has been repeatedly stated, there is little interest in leaving at present. The minorities are on the whole contented with life in Hong Kong, regard this as their home, are mostly well entrenched in business or the civil service or are long-term employees with their roots here. Their only desire is to have the right at some future date to emigrate if conditions in Hong Kong make it impossible to stay. That, coupled with the right to enter as visitors to the UK without visas, would be an acceptable compromise for the majority, if the British Government is unwilling or unable to take all."

That is only the view of one newspaper, albeit the leading English language newspaper in Hong Kong, but it suggests that at the least the Government could have gone a bit further.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I agree with my hon. Friend in the case that he has made about the unsatisfactory nature of the order. In view of the fact that the Government are now a lame duck Government fast approaching the end of their term of office,—only a couple of Conservative Members are making gesticulations, and other Conservative Members are being very quiet about this—

[Dr. John Marek]

will my hon. Friend in the next Labour Government reconsider the order in the light of the changing circumstances and the situation at that time?

Mr. Dubs: My hon. Friend has anticipated precisely what I was about to say. It is right that I should state what the next Labour Government's policy will be — *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may laugh, but the policies of the next Labour Government will be with us pretty soon. I am sure that Conservative Members are aware of that. The Opposition have a commitment to repeal the Immigration Act and the Nationality Act and to replace those measures with non-discriminatory legislation. This will involve inevitably a wide-ranging review of immigration and nationality policy. As part of that review, we shall take into account the requests and claims of various groups, including those of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. We shall take those into account as the basis of a just and non-discriminatory immigration and nationality policy.

The critical date for the people of Hong Kong is 1 July 1997, and there will be a Labour Government in Britain many years before then. We shall be starting——

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dubs: I shall not give way. Other hon. Members wish to speak and I do not want to tresspass on their time.

We shall be starting the process of reviewing immigration and nationality policy in about two years' time, when we shall be sitting on the Government Benches.

It would not have taken much for the Government this evening to show a little awareness of the real concerns of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. I do not think that the Home Secretary showed any real concern. He said that he had thought about the matter and had decided that the answer would be no. Some of the assurances that he tried to give the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong sounded singularly unconvincing. Indeed, it sounded as if the right hon. Gentleman was not convinced of what he was saying.

The ethnic minorities have the right to say that the Government have turned a deaf ear to their plea, and that is not good enough. For that reason, we shall be voting against the order.

10.58 pm

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): My family connection with Hong Kong goes back 75 years, and in the previous Parliament, for a couple of years, I was the Minister concerned with Hong Kong at the time when the negotiations which led to the successful agreement that was initialed in 1984 were in their early stages. I take a great interest, therefore, in the success of Hong Kong and in the welfare and preservation of the way of life of all its people of whatever race. I want to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on the decision that he has taken and on the terms of the order.

I pressed my hon. Friend the Minister of State on the endorsing of passports and on the matter of prisoners of war when we debated the draft order dealing with these issues, and I want especially to express my gratitude for the steps that have been taken on those two points. They have not been easy matters. I know that the drafting of the wording to go into the passport was not easy but, I believe that the Government have come to the right solution.

Another matter which caused anxiety some time ago was whether the BNO passport would be acceptable at all to various countries. We no longer hear about that. I quote it as an example of something which caused considerable concern in Hong Kong but which has now been shown to have had no substance. Those who live in the intense, active and intelligent society of Hong Kong sometimes get themselves into a state of unnecessary anxiety.

The most difficult question relates to the ethnic minorities. The Council of Hongkong Indian Associations will, I know, be very disappointed by the decision. As has already been mentioned, it has lobbied effectively. I want to make four points about this matter.

First, it is not correct to allege, as the Council of Hongkong Indian Associations has alleged, that the Government have broken their promises. It is perfectly clear from what was said in the previous debate that no promises have been broken. I speak with some feeling, because after the debate a few months ago on the draft order I was accused of having broken a promise. That statement was entirely without foundation. I believe it does not help the case of the Council of Hongkong Indian Associations if it makes reckless accusations of that kind.

Secondly, I wish to refer to the numbers involved. The Council of Hongkong Indian Associations referred to 10,000. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department referred to 11,500. But is this the full picture? There must be people who do not hold BDTC passports but who are entitled to apply for BDTC passports. Moreover, will not the children of the 11,500 be entitled to BDTC passports before 1997? They will swell the number to well over 11,500. It is unrealistic to refer to 11,500 or 10,000. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State who is to reply to the debate will say something about that question. Thirdly, I welcome the language used by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in his answer to a parliamentary question on 23 April. In particular I welcome his statement that

"we have concluded that the granting of British citizenship is not justified in the present circumstances."—[*Official Report*, 23 April, 1986; Vol. 96, c. 147.]

I emphasise the words "in the present circumstances."

That answer appears to me to keep the door a bit open. I welcome also the words that have already been quoted about the possibility that British nationals might come under pressure to leave Hong Kong. They show that the Government's mind is not closed. It is right to remind the people of Hong Kong that there are still 11 years to go before 1997. If circumstances change drastically during that time—I do not believe that they will—this matter can be looked at again. I want to emphasise to my friends in Hong Kong that the language used by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in his parliamentary answer is, in the British parliamentary context, very important and significant. They are not empty promises. They will be regarded as very important, if ever they should become relevant.

Fourthly, we should try to be clear about why the minorities in Hong Kong are worried. They are not worried about the agreement. They think it is a good agreement—as, I believe, everybody does. It guarantees to the people of Hong Kong all the freedom that they could possibly wish. It gives to them the right of abode. If we

ask ourselves whether or not this agreement is being well implemented, the answer is that it is being implemented step by step with the Government of China. Agreement has been reached in the Land Commission about land. Agreement has also been reached about Hong Kong's position in the Asian Development bank. A very important agreement was reached recently that Hong Kong will be an independent member of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. That agreement was reached between China, the United Kingdom and GATT. It is more important than some of the other matters that have been causing concern in recent weeks to the people of Hong Kong.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): The right hon. Gentleman has referred to the fears of the Asian community in Hong Kong. He had long experience as Minister of State with responsibility for Hong Kong. What does he consider to be the true position of Peking if the British Government give British citizenship to these people? Does he really believe that after 1 July 1997 China will give Chinese citizenship to them?

Sir Peter Blaker: Peking has made it clear that it regards that question as a matter for the British Government, which is exactly what I expected it to say. The hon. Gentleman's latter question has already been answered—it is open to Hong Kong people to apply for citizenship of the People's Republic of China, and that sort of position applies in many countries throughout the world.

I was dealing with the question of what was causing anxiety to the Indian community in Hong Kong. Why does it want us to take action now, on the assumption that the agreement will not work? I believe that the Indians are worried not that they are likely to be expelled from Hong Kong after 1997 but that they may be discriminated against. We must recognise that relations between China and India, and between the Chinese and the Indians, have not always been free from friction. However, I believe that after 1997 there will be a rather special position in Hong Kong. There will be not a free enterprise territory run by Communists, but a free enterprise territory run by the people of Hong Kong. That is the whole point of the agreement. I think that the people of Hong Kong will recognise the mutual inter-dependence of all elements of Hong Kong society.

The Indians are inclined to say, and I am sure that they are right, that they control 20 per cent. of Hong Kong's foreign trade. Will the Chinese people of Hong Kong, after 1997, want to destroy or render less effective a community that is so important in the running of Hong Kong's economy? Surely it is clear to us now that China has understood the importance of confidence in a free enterprise economy and also, at least in part, the way in which a free enterprise economy works.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The right hon. Gentleman is trying to explain away the concern of some of the Indian community. Will he not, in the way in which he usually attacks these matters, be absolutely frank and admit that, regardless of the present contribution of the Indian community to the welfare of Hong Kong, there is a past history that worries many Indians? They were the upholders of law and order under the British Government. In terms of the Pathan riot squad and acting frequently as prison warders and night watchmen, they were the maintainers of law and order. They will not necessarily be popular in the future social order of Hong Kong.

Sir Peter Blaker: I do not accept that premise. If Hong Kong is to run itself—which I believe will be the case, and which is the whole basis of the agreement on which everyone has been congratulating both Britain and China —the hon. Gentleman's point is not valid.

I want to cite an example that shows that Chinese and Indians can co-operate. I am surprised that it has not yet been cited. It is the example of Singapore. I believe that the Foreign Minister of Singapore is an Indian—Mr. Dhanabalan; he certainly was when I was a Minister. The Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore, which is predominately Chinese, is or recently was an Indian. There are other Indian Ministers and also prominent Indians in every walk of life. There is co-operation and equal rights between Chinese and Indians in Singapore, though it is a Chinese-dominated society in terms of numbers. I do not see why the Indians should be so pessimistic about the possibility of Hong Kong operating on a similar basis.

I say again what I said in the previous debate—that I believe that the agreement will be observed because it is in the interests of China as well as the people of Hong Kong that it should be observed. However, I take comfort from the fact that if things do go wrong, the Government —as I understand it—have kept the door ajar.

11.9 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): It has already been noted that the House had an earlier and more lengthy opportunity of considering substantially this order on 16 January. However, on 16 January it so happened, for reasons which are not directly connected with the future of Hong Kong, that I was not a Member of the House. Therefore, I take the opportunity as briefly as possible afforded by tonight's debate of placing on record my anxieties about the future consequences of the changes which the order will make in the nationality law of the United Kingdom.

Those changes are two. The first is that we are extending British nationality at present to 3·25 million Hong Kong Chinese. It is British nationality because we repeatedly call it British nationality; and, because they are to be designated British nationals, their passports are to be issued in the name of Her Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State, and are to be renewed or issued as necessary by the consular posts of the United Kingdom. In every natural respect those who obtain that status will be regarded as British nationals.

The world knows what it thinks a British national is. It thinks a British national is a person who has the same rights in relation to the United Kingdom as a national of any other country normally has in relation to that other country, notably the right of entry and abode. That right does not inhere in that status. Therefore, the question arises, what is to be the future, in the event of there being a strong desire on the part of the holders of that status not to remain in Hong Kong, and if they were to look to the United Kingdom, of which we are making them nationals, as the natural place of abode or of residence?

It is not necessary in order to consider that prospect seriously to cast any doubt on the bona fides or to deny any of the hopes attached to the People's Republic of China,

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

although our memories do not have to be long to survey a different scene in that People's Republic of China. It is simply necessary that our people have understood that the calling in of the implication of the conferment of our nationality on 3·25 million Chinese is not something which rests in the power of discretion of the United Kingdom. It depends on the behaviour of others and on circumstances over which, by definition, we shall have no control.

If those circumstances were so to develop that the implications of British nationality were to be sought, we should come under intolerable pressure in the world at large and within the United Kingdom community to acknowledge the reality of nationality, and that that reality cannot be devoid of a right of entry and of abode. Therefore, I believe that we are creating a potential commitment in what we are doing which we have no right to create and which I do not believe is fully understood by those outside.

It is not absolutely clear why we have thought it necessary to do so, or why we have had the concurrence —no more was needed—of the Chinese Government in doing so. It is not clear why a people so sensitive and proud as the Chinese should have been so ready to concur in our nationality being conferred on 3·25 million Hong Kong Chinese. It is not absolutely clear why, since a travel document and a passport of Hong Kong is to be available for ethnic Chinese after 1997, the availability of that document as a travel document should be regarded as so singularly important. I fear that it is regarded as an insurance that can be claimed in due course upon the strength of the implications of what we are doing in extending in this way our nationality.

That is the largest of the two changes that we are making, and potentially the most dangerous. The second has already been referred to quite extensively, and I shall therefore refer to it only briefly. It is that those who would otherwise be stateless are, by virtue of this order, to be able to obtain the status of British overseas citizenship. It is not clear, if they are stateless without it, what state they have with it.

Much has been said about the passports that will be available to the British nationals (overseas), but little has been said about the passports of the British overseas citizens, although I presume that they, too, if they are issued at all, will be issued in the name of Her Britanic Majesty's Secretary of State. There again, we are proporting to give a status to which there does not attach the most valuable quality and characteristics that national status and the possession of a nationality gives throughout the world. In doing this, we are incurring the danger of misunderstanding, and of being accused of double dealing in offering something and, upon it being claimed, its reality being found to be virtually non-existent.

We are in this position, as those of us who lived through the debates on the British Nationality Act 1981 are aware, as a result of the transformation of our nationality from one that rested upon allegience, before 1948, to one that now has a quite different basis, and which we have endeavoured, in line with other countries, to equate with connection with this United Kingdom, of which it is the nationality and the citizenship. We have been left with loose ends, and I fear that the manner in which this matter proceeds in regard to British nationality has left two loose ends—one large and pregnant with major danger, and the other, although minor in its scope, still pregnant with understanding and disgrace.

11.17 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I feel that I must criticise the Government because we should have had this debate yesterday, and it should have gone on for a much longer period than the time allotted to it tonight. Whoever in the Government is responsible for this change should be thoroughly ashamed of himself for compressing this debate into one and a half hours, which is not being fair to hon. Members.

I remind my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary of the promise that was made by my noble Friend Baroness Young on 19 February 1985, when she promised that the order would be withdrawn and revised to take account of the views expressed. In the debates that took place in this House and in the other place, many expressed grave doubts. I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to what has gone on in the Hong Kong Legislative Council, which overwhelmingly asked for safeguards for the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. They are not ethnically Chinese, and are not entitled to Chinese citizenship. Their only national status is that of British nationals overseas, and as far as I am aware that gives them no right to live anywhere, and cannot be passed on to their children.

I am speaking particularly on behalf of the 6,000 people who make up the Indian community, because most of them come from families which settled in Hong Kong many years ago and regard Hong Kong as their natural home. In 1947 they opted to stay in Hong Kong rather than accept Indian citizenship, and one of the problems about that is that India does not offer dual citizenship.

These people opted for Hong Kong because they believed in Hong Kong, and that is where they want to stay for ever. The community has always supported Britain, and has always been on our side. There is great anger in Hong Kong about the Government's behaviour.

This week I received a letter from a lady which stated:

"We are spending four months in Hong Kong where my husband is visiting Royal Society professor at the university here. (Our home is in Hale, Altrincham.)"

She is lucky — she has a very good Member of Parliament. Her letter continued:

"Having talked with many people here in Hong Kong, Chinese and expatriate alike, we have been saddened by reports of the Government's attitude towards the ethnic minorities, particularly the Indians, and very aware of the deep concern here for these people."

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary seems to believe certain things. First, he seems to believe that minorities will have the right to live in Hong Kong as a matter of law. In fact, I have been told that the right to live in Hong Kong will be subject to the powers of another nation—in this case, China, of which these people are not nationals.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend seems to feel that if we accede to the claims of that small number of people the position of other British overseas citizens will be affected. I remind my right hon. Friend that in the case of Gibraltar and the Falklands we have done something for the people who live there.

Thirdly, my right hon. Friend argues that to accede to the requests of these people would wrongly imply doubt about the commitment of the Sino-British joint declaration. The fact is that the Chinese Government

believe that providing the Indian minority with an effective form of nationality is a matter for this Government and not for the Chinese Government.

Fourthly, my right hon. Friend seems to say blithely that if, in 1997, there is pressure for these people to leave Hong Kong, the Government of the day in Britain will consider sympathetically whether to admit them to the United Kingdom on a case-by-case basis. I am afraid that that has not assured the Hong Kong people or the Legislative Council. I believe that some of my right hon. Friend's statements are erroneous. People in Hong Kong to whom I have talked do not share my right hon. Friend's equanimity on this issue. They think that it is less than satisfactory to be given a vague non-binding assurance rather than a legal entitlement, which would at least put their minds at rest. They do not want to be the boat people of 1997. They want effective citizenship which guarantees them the right of abode somewhere.

Of course, numbers are important, and I have always agreed with the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) on this point. Over the years we have made a total mess of immigration. It is not a matter of the total population of Hong Kong wanting to descend on this country. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) pointed out the difficulties if large numbers of people want to settle here. I suggest to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary—I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State will give some thought to this also—that we have a cut-off date, for example, in 1990, by which time all non-Chinese BDTCs should be required to register, and those non-Chinese BDTCs who have no other nationality available should qualify for full British citizenship. The time to do that is now, not in 1997. A three-year cut-off period would at least give the authorities time to examine each application.

I believe that there is something called justice and that the people who have given great loyalty to Britain over the years are entitled to some consideration. They do not want to descend on this country. They want to stay in Hong Kong, because it is there that they have their families, homes and businesses. All I ask is that they should have some security and not be left as stateless persons. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister can give some assurance. If he cannot give any assurance, I am afraid that I shall not vote in the Lobby with my hon. Friends.

11.23 pm

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The Government have wisely yielded on the two issues on which they should never have demurred for such a long series of debates. A sinner's repentance—to a Presbyterian, that is particularly attractive—is always a plus and a bonus. The Government have many pluses and bonuses to earn in the hereafter.

We are pleased that the argument for the passport endorsement making it clear that Hong Kong British people do not need visas to visit Britain has at long last been accepted. It is only right also that ex-service men who have done their duty by this country will be granted full British citizenship or the right to settle in Britain. The protracted arguments in debate after debate which have been required to achieve these minor corrections should never have been necessary. That sad fact shows how mean minded the Government of the present Prime Minister are.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House know that there are many other examples of that meanness of spirit in many fields of policy. One of them, in this very matter of retreat from empire, is the continued refusal of the Government to accept their responsibilities — our responsibilities, British responsibilities—for the 11,000 or so British nationals in Hong Kong who are not ethnically Chinese and who, unlike those of Chinese origin, are not entitled to Chinese citizenship. Their status as British nationals overseas gives them no right to live anywhere and cannot be passed on to their children.

Government spokesmen have trotted out in this long series of debates all the old arguments of evasion and, excuse and supposed explanation. Let me briefly try to counter some of their obfuscation. These 11,000 or so British nationals overseas——

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: British overseas citizens.

Mr. Faulds: No, they will now be called British nationals (overseas) if the order is passed. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will catch up with that in time.

Those British nationals (overseas) are not planning en bloc to decamp from Hong Kong. Their lives are committed to that series of island territories. They simply seek the security of a proper citizenship, not a paper one. They do not want to have to leave their homes in Hong Kong. They just want that security of citizenship.

The agreement guaranteed right of abode to everyone who already has it but excluded non-Chinese from Chinese nationality. It is Her Majesty's Government's responsibility to put right their statelessness. It is not China's responsibility as those people are not nationals and China has no ultimate responsibility for them. The Government know that very well. Although I have been a long time friend of the People's Republic, I am convinced that if we abdicate our post-imperial responsibility, future Chinese Governments will behave with proper consideration. China does not abandon or abrogate its international commitment.

There were earlier arguments put forward by Her Majesty's Government that the Chinese majority in Hong Kong would resent special treatment for the minorities. That devious pretence was put paid to by the Legislative Council's generosity in stating its understanding of the vulnerability of people without a secure nationality. Indeed, it has endorsed the need for special treatment.

Finally, there was the argument that the People's Republic of China would consider special treatment as showing that the United Kingdom and Hong Kong Governments lacked faith in the agreement. The Chinese Government is much too sensible and much too sophisticated to credit such nonsense. Indeed, the pro Peking press in Hong Kong supported the proposed changes. One newspaper, which takes the official line, called in question the right of abode in Hong Kong, proffered by Her Majesty's Government, as having anything to do with citizenship as such.

All those who know Hong Kong best, from businessmen to parliamentarians—and there are many of them in the House—from journalists to ex-governors of the place, have urged the Government to be generous in this last exercise of our colonial exit. It can be only the lack of vision and the mean spirit of the present Prime Minister that prevents a proper resolution of this last issue.

The Foreign Secretary is a warm-hearted and generous individual, and so, indeed, is the Home Secretary,

[Mr. Faulds]

although he simulated some conviction in his speech a little earlier this evening. Ministers in both this House and the other place have made commitments in debate after debate that they would revise their views to take account of what was said in the various debates. Here, I must disagree with my old right hon. Friend who seemed to argue the contrary. I think that Blackpool is his place of abode normally. Ministers had need to do so because this matter has been pushed through on an Order in Council instead of through primary legislation, which the House could debate, and the point is then amend. If, indeed, both Houses had had that opportunity, they would have made an amendment on this particular issue.

I can best sum up the case that I think most of us in the House want to make tonight in the excellent coda to a document that some of us have received from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. It states:

"The minorities in Hong Kong have won all the arguments, convinced the doubting and undermined all objections."—

I do not think that any of us in the House would disagree with that—

"The government's response is unworthy of the calibre of the debate and the breadth of concern in both Houses of Parliament. We would urge members of both Houses to restate their opposition to the unamended order and to insist that the government keeps its promise and acts in the spirit of the debates in Britain and in Hong Kong."

I think most of us in the House tonight would strongly endorse that argument.

11.31 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I shall detain the House for but a very few minutes.

I should like to add my welcome to the fact that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary was able to concede two of the three issues that exercised the minds of many hon. Members on both sides of the House during our debate on 16 January. However, I must also register my disappointment that my right hon. Friend has not felt able to concede British citizenship and the consequent right of abode here in Britain to the non-Chinese ethnic minority British dependent territories citizens. While, clearly, that was the most difficult of the three issues, I am as yet not persuaded that my right hon. Friend has come to the right conclusion.

I have read many thousands of words—I am sure that everyone has — on the subject since our debate in January, and they have become fairly repetitive. Since then it has become clear that because, under Chinese law, only ethnic Chinese BDTCs can become Chinese citizens, the non-ethnic minorities would become stateless in 1997. The British national (overseas) status for the former BDTCs and the grant of the nebulous British overseas citizenship to their children and grandchildren born after 1997 merely postpones statelessness to the fourth generation, unless the Chinese decide to amend their law. That is something that they seem singularly unwilling to do. As has been said by several people, the people in Peking seem to prefer to leave that question entirely to the British Government as they see it as our problem, not theirs.

It is also clear that the Chinese ethnic majority in Hong Kong is not seeking to use the non-ethnic minority as a Trojan horse to reopen the whole question of the status for Chinese BDTCs after 1997. Hence it cannot be claimed that there would be a knock-on effect in Hong Kong.

What about the possibility of a concession to the non-Chinese in Hong Kong being cited as a precedent at some future date should we give up any of our few remaining colonies thereafter? There seems to be no likelihood of any other colony being ceded to another sovereign power of such different political and philosophical status and attitude as the People's Republic. In the case of the Falklands and Gibraltar — two territories that could conceivably be ceded to another sovereign power rather than granted independence in their own right — very specific promises have been given that the will of the people of those two territories will be paramount—and in any case, we have already conceded precisely that right of abode to the Falkland islanders and Gibraltarians that the non-Chinese ethnic minorities in Hong Kong seek. I could quote Gibraltar and the Falklands Islands as a precedent for the non-Chinese ethnic minority in Hong Kong. I believe that the remaining British colonies— and I went through that very short list this evening— which consists of Anguilla, Bermuda, British Antarctic Territory, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, British Indian Ocean Territories, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat, the Pitcairn Islands, Saint Helena and Tristan Da Cunha and finally the Turks and Caicos Islands are unlikely to produce a situation similar to that in Hong Kong.

I am one of those who believe that this country has given a home to as many people from overseas as it can possibly absorb. None the less, I believe that in the case for the non-Chinese ethnic minority in Hong Kong, we are bound by the responsibilities of our colonial past to ensure that we do not bequeath a group of stateless children of British overseas citizens to the Government of 80 years from now. That would be a cop-out.

I will support the Government tonight, with some reservations. I will do so in the knowledge that, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) said, there is still plenty of time for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to do what would be right by the non-Chinese ethnic minority in Hong Kong.

11.35 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) did not conclude his remarks by saying that he would follow the logic of his arguments and vote against the order. I agree with much of what he said, and his hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) put the case as succinctly as did any hon. Member in the debate. I was pleased that he concluded by saying that he would not support the order. That was the logical conclusion of the case that he advocated in his speech.

I was fortunate enough to be in Hong Kong over the Easter recess, and I discussed these matters at some length with the various groups involved, with representatives of the Council of Hong Kong Indian Associations and with Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils. The House should not underestimate the strength of feeling that still exists in Hong Kong on this issue.

The Government's decision on the endorsement on the passport is greatly welcomed in Hong Kong. It had been asked for vigorously by the people in Hong Kong for some time. One point that was made earlier in the debate is that

there has been an irritating need for people to obtain and pay for entry certificates if they are not to have difficulties when they arrive at Heathrow or some other port of entry. I should like the Minister to assure the House that that will not be necessary with the new endorsement in the passport. There has also been a welcome in Hong Kong, as there has been throughout the House, for the Government's decision on the ex-service men.

There is still a unity of condemnation in Hong Kong of the Government's action over the non-ethnic Chinese, and also of their unwillingness to listen to the united voice of the people in Hong Kong and the strong voices of hon. Members here and in another place.

The Government and this country have a moral responsibility towards that relatively small group of people. During recent years the number of Vietnamese refugees that we have taken in from Hong Kong is roughly the same as the number of the non-ethnic Chinese community in Hong Kong about whom we are concerned. That puts the numbers that we are talking about into context.

I do not accept, and do not think that many hon. Members would accept, that because we advocate that the Government should accept the representations on this issue, we must say that the other people whom the Home Secretary mentioned should also have a right to come to this country. That does not follow, and we all believe that, because of the unique nature of the situation, a ring fence could and should be put around these 11,500 people and they should be allowed to come to this country. That does not reflect upon the unique and excellent agreement with the Chinese Government, because the Chinese have made it clear that they regard that as a British responsibility and that the British Government should accept their responsibility and act upon it.

These people do not want their right to live in Hong Kong to be subject to the powers of China, a country of which they are not nationals. Their statelessness and lack of an abode in the world, if they need it, is the basis of their claim to the House for British citizenship.

I believe that we could find a solution to the problem. Indeed, they themselves have suggested that there should be a cut-off date, which would ensure that a ring fence was put around the problem, that numbers were clearly identified and that a continuing commitment was not being accepted. They have suggested that approach and we should be prepared to accept it.

On that basis, we on these Benches believe that this injustice should be rectified. We would wish to rectify it, if the opportunity arose, before 1997. With that in mind we will vote against the order tonight, in the hope that at some stage it will be rectified.

11.41 pm

Sir Paul Bryan (Boothferry): I should have thought that in this frustrating game of politics most of us have found that however worthy our objective, and however we persevere in pursuing it, we seldom achieve 100 per cent. success.

In approaching the order, the Legislative Council set their sights on three changes, of which their Members made sure that we were aware, and more than aware. Their effective campaigning has achieved two of their objectives; but the third only in part. I hope that they will not view that as a failure, but as a positive success, if not a 100 per cent. success.

The endorsement of the passports will be provided in full. It only remains for the Government to persuade other countries to respect it. British citizenship for those who served in the defence of Hong Kong is, quite rightly, granted.

The Home Secretary has explained the reasons for the Government's attitude to the claims of the third objective, that of the British dependent territories citizens who are not ethnically Chinese. Of course, our Indian friends will be very disappointed.

I ask them not to underrate, as the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) has done, the assurance in the Home Secretary's reply which reads:

> "If, however, any British national were in the future to come under pressure to leave Hong Kong, we would expect the Government of the day to consider sympathetically the case for admission to the United Kingdom." — [*Official Report*, 23 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 148.]

The hon. Member for Battersea said that those words were inadequate, although he gave little in the way of an alternative. I took down his words. He talked about life being unpleasant or intolerable.

That is not an adequate substitute for those words in the statement. I consider the assurance that has been given to be exceptional. It is a serious step for a Government to commit their successors in this way. The assurance should not be scorned.

The changes should be seen as part of the broad and positive progress that is being made in Hong Kong on several important fronts. The machinery set up under the joint agreement is being seen to work. The all-important basic law drafting and consultative committees are regarded now by the people of Hong Kong with some confidence as a serious attempt by the Chinese to equate the law to the joint declaration. The original doubts as to the role of the joint liaison committee are beginning to fade, as its practical value is emerging. It has cleared the way for the endorsement of the passport, for entry into GATT with immediate and independent negotiating status and for membership of the Asian Development bank. The Land Commission, another body set up under the agreement, has shown itself to be flexible in dealing with the tricky problems involving revenue from land sales. These important changes are taking place against the background of Hong Kong's continuing prosperity and social development. Hong Kong will be building a third university by 1994, a unified stock exchange has been established and a housing authority——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman must address his remarks to the subject matter of the order, which is British nationality.

Sir Paul Bryan: Great progress continues to be made in all the spheres to which I have referred. Such progress is vital for the future of Hong Kong. The additional progress that the order represents is part of the advance that we want to see, and provided the British Government and Hong Kong's friends in this House and in the other place continue to show our genuine commitment to its well-being, confidence there can be maintained in the difficult years to 1997.

11.4 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The essence of this debate is the Government's unreasonable

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

and unjustified attitude to Hong Kong's non-Chinese ethnic minority. Their refusal to grant them right of abode in Britain is an abdication of a clear moral responsibility.

I appreciate that some hon. Members even some Ministers, feel that if Britain took the appropriate action, it would upset the Chinese and be interpreted as an expression of no confidence in the Sino British agreement. While I am a warm supporter of that agreement and would not do anything to damage it, there is no substance in the view that providing British citizenship for the non-Chinese ethnic minority would offend China. It has been made abundantly clear in recent months by, in particular, Mr. Xu Jia Tun, head of the Xinhua News Agency in Hong Kong, that the Chinese would have no objection to British citizenship being given to the non-Chinese ethnic minority.

In a recent letter to me, the Prime Minister said that no BDTCs in Hong Kong need fear statelessness, and the Home Secretary implied that in his remarks tonight. But that was a thoroughly misleading statement for the Prime Minister to have made. We understand the rights and privileges of citizenship. The new status conferred on BDTCs denies them the right of abode in Britain and denies them legitimate citizenship.

Statelessness is not avoided by handing out bits of paper. If it were, confetti would be invaluable. As we know, confetti merely showers good will. The members of the non-Chinese ethnic minority in Hong Kong do not just want good will. Nor do they want the sympathetic consideration offered them by the Home Secretary. They want rights. The Government are proferring a bogus kind of citizenship, one that is devoid of the basic right of abode. It is a counterfeit status which, like any forged banknote, seeks to convey credibility but which will not bear close inspection.

The Government should recognise that they are creating bitterness and disillusionment in Hong Kong. They should be aware that their refusal may force the ethnic minority to leave Hong Kong and to seek citizenship elsewhere. Those people are crucial to the success of this unique proposal for Hong Kong's future. Their departure would seriously damage Hong Kong. The Government should not allow their nightmare fears, nor those of some right hon. Gentlemen, to supersede justice.

The Government have rightly acknowledged that the joint declaration, creating "one country, two systems", was a unique and imaginative concept. To help the non-Chinese ethnic minority who are the unwitting victims of this remarkable and warmly welcomed development, the Government should show a generous and imaginative response. It is only by granting citizenship to this minority that the Government can rise to the occasion and also act with fairness and justice. I hope that the Government will think again.

11.50 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The order is important for the Indian community in Hong Kong but equally for the politics of Hong Kong. The hon. Member for Boothferry (Sir P. Bryan) was right to draw attention to the wider considerations which unfortunately——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman was quite wrong.

Dr. Bray: Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is part of the problem. The people and the Legislative Council of Hong Kong attach particular importance to this House because it helps to build up their standing vis-a-vis the People's Republic of China in the difficult transition that they have to make.

Hong Kong made three requests. It is good that two of them should have been conceded by the Government. Some progress has been made. I agree that weight should be attached to the assurances given by the Home Secretary, but Hong Kong will make sure that the argument continues and is considered again by a future Government. I hope, therefore, that the Government will not be too discouraging.

11.52 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): The debate has concentrated on the third request made by the Hong Kong Legislative and Executive Councils, but the House will not forget the extent to which the Government have responded to the views expressed in the House when we last discussed these matters and the extent to which we have taken account of the views then expressed, as promised. It cannot be suggested that that debate was a waste of time and that the Government responded with deaf ears.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) was a little unfair in his comments about the procedure adopted. After all, we went to great lengths to follow a procedure which allowed the House to debate at length a draft Order in Council so that the Government could hear the views of the House and go away and consider them. We have met the wishes of Hong Kong on the passport endorsement. We recognise how important it is to the people of Hong Kong to know that genuine visitors will always be welcome here. In regard to other countries, the clear indication in the passport that the holder has the right of abode in Hong Kong, guaranteeing returnability to Hong Kong, should mean that the passport is every bit as acceptable as the present BDTC passport.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) for his comments. The hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) was rather churlish and showed no comprehension of the difficulty involved in finding an exactly appropriate form of words to put on the passport to reflect the rights which all of us wish to see stated clearly in it.

We have also met entirely the wishes of Hong Kong on service men. I am glad that UMELCO has welcomed what we are doing as "a fitting recognition" of the service given by these people.

The arguments about those British dependent territories citizens who are not ethnically Chinese have been stated often, but I should stress a few points. We cannot accept, as suggested by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) and by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), that a form of British nationality that does not carry with it a right of abode in Britain is not a genuine form of nationality. British overseas citizens are not stateless. They travel round the world on British passports. They are entitled to British consular protection. To accept that they are stateless is to accept that we have a continuing obligation to accept no fewer than 2 million BOCs living throughout the world.

I invite the House to remember that, while saying how valueless the citizenship was, the hon. Member for Battersea made a commitment that was so woolly as to be almost meaningless. All that he said was that if, unfortunately, a Labour Government returned to office, they would scrap the British Nationality Act 1981 and the Immigration Act 1971, and they would take account of the requests made by all sorts of people. What sort of an undertaking is that? What sort of a sign is it of the hon. Gentleman's true reaction to the order? What sign does it give us of the official Opposition's attitude to the order? It gives us no sign at all, and the hon. Gentleman might as well not have stood at the Dispatch Box. We are no wiser than we were before the debate as to where the Opposition stand on this matter.

The arguments of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) are always interesting. He said that we were extending British nationality to 3·25 million people. He did not mention that we are giving a different form of British nationality to 3·25 million people who already have British nationality, which is different from the impression which he may, unwittingly, have given during his speech.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale said that the non-ethnic Chinese wish to continue living in Hong Kong. We cannot give them the right to do so by conferring upon them British citizenship, but we have won them the right to do so by the agreement. That agreement is binding in international law, and it will be written into a basic law governing the Hong Kong special administrative region. British citizenship cannot be transmitted further than to the second generation born abroad, so British citizenship could not give to the non-ethnic Chinese a nationality that could be transmitted to their descendants any further than the British overseas citizenship which, under the order, can be transmitted to their children and grandchildren born after 1997.

That is an answer to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman). We could no more guarantee British citizenship to the children and grandchildren of those people beyond the second generation born abroad by granting them British citizenship than we could by granting them British overseas citizenship.

We must remember our commitment as a Government to a firm immigration policy, but I repeat that if any non-ethnic Chinese BDTCs were at any time to come under pressure to leave Hong Kong, we would expect the Government of the day to consider sympathetically their admission to the United Kingdom on a case-by-case basis. That has been described as a "strong moral commitment". I agree with that description.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted Business).*

The House divided: Ayes 295, Noes 119.

Division No. 177] **[12 midnight**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McLaughlin Patrick
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian

Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Carol Mather, and
Mr. Robert Boscawen

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Hong Kong (British Nationality) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 7th May, be approved.

Heathrow-Gatwick Helicopter Link

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

12.11 am

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): I am very grateful for this opportunity to debate the Heathrow to Gatwick helicopter airlink. It is an issue of profound importance to my constituents.

The licence was originally granted to British Caledonian Airways Ltd. and British Airways Helicopters Ltd. for one year only in 1978. A new application was granted in 1979 for four years. In 1983, British Caledonian and British Airways Helicopters Ltd. jointly applied to continue the service for a further 10 years. The Civil Aviation Authority granted the application on 1 February 1984, but, on 10 June 1984, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport directed the CAA to vary the licence so that it would terminate four months after the M25 motorway between Reigate and Wisley was opened.

On 21 November 1985, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State issued a direction to the CAA that, if the licence did not expire first, it should be revoked from 7 February 1986. British Caledonian applied for deletion of this note in the licence requiring it to cease operations.

The four conditions of this licence, which have remained unchanged since it was originally granted in 1978, are onerous. None of them is normally found in CAA licences for air transport operations, but they were considered necessary by the CAA in view of the particular nature of the operation.

In November and December 1985 the CAA held a hearing that lasted for 16 working days to deal with the application. In reaching its decision, the CAA took into account many factors and heard many witnesses who fully represented the views of the operators and the objectors. In its decision, handed down on 4 February 1986, it considered at great length the legal framework, the economic arguments, costs, revenue implications, airline competition and airports policy, the users, the choice between Airlink and Speedlink, the M25 motorway, the environment and the disturbance caused to it, present and proposed routes and the minimisation of disturbance. It acted as the responsible, expert body that it undoubtedly is.

Having considered all the arguments for and against the continuation of this important service, the CAA concluded that Airlink should continue with effect from such date as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State notified it. The CAA accordingly gave notice to the Secretary of State of its decision, and the Secretary of State indicated that he would need some time to consider the matter. However, before he had stated his position, in accordance with the earlier directive on the licence, the service ceased on 7 February this year.

The Secretary of State then invited representations from involved parties to the CAA's decision. The operator's own representation stressed the low number of relevant written objections and of non-Airlink incidents, the general misconceptions about the matter, the possibility that the joint local authorities' objections had not been based on proper advice and the exaggerated effects of Airlink on the environment.

British Caledonian pointed out that it had offered new routes and altitudes to reduce environmental impact on particular areas at its own instigation and not as a CAA requirement, following earlier discussions between some of the objectors and Airlink staff. British Caledonian welcomed the M25 but questioned its ability to provide a suitable route both now and in the future—a question subsequently entirely justified by experience.

Further, the CAA in its earlier decision had agreed that travel by road remained an imperfect substitute for many Airlink passengers. British Caledonian pointed out that Speedlink could not possibly match the Airlink service, was not a suitable alternative and could never achieve the competitiveness needed by the London airports system.

Since its inception in 1978, the Airlink service has become a vital element in the London airports system. It has earned £10·5 million directly and £100 million in interline revenue for the London airports. Airlink has created 62 jobs and carried 600,000 passengers. I estimate that nearly half the existing passengers will in future avoid London if Airlink ceases—a potential loss of revenue to British Caledonian of £5 million to £6 million, and of about £14 million to United Kingdom airlines overall.

The management of British Caledonian — I am inclined to agree—believes that Airlink is being used as a scapegoat for environmental objections. The Government have paid scant regard to environmental objections to the Channel tunnel, with wide compulsory purchase powers being granted for land purchase. My right hon. Friend has suddenly adopted what appears to me to be a pious attitude to a service to which the environmental objections are questionable, and which produces much income for the United Kingdom in terms of tourist traffic and the utilisation of the London airports.

Motorway access is already proving unsatisfactory, especially at peak times in the morning and afternoon, which already coincide with airline peak times. The M25 is already heavily congested and Surrey police have now observed that, when a blockage occurs on the M25 in peak times, it creates a one-mile tailback in four minutes.

Traffic levels are now three or four years in advance of predicted levels, and in a year or two they will increase to a wholly unacceptable and extreme level. A blockage is now normal every day during morning and afternoon rush hours, yet the Minister is suggesting that Airlink should wait a year or two to see what the traffic position will be. The United Kingdom tourist industry cannot and will not thrive on such extraordinary complacency. If the Minister is so convinced that the motorway is adequate, he should see for himself the congestion at peak hours. He would then realise the deep anger and frustration felt by anyone with an urgent connection to catch at Gatwick or Heathrow.

I come now to the disparities between Gatwick and Heathrow in the number of destinations operated. The frequency of services from Gatwick is inferior to Heathrow. Gatwick has 115 destinations, Heathrow 223 —almost twice the number. The connecting helicopter service greatly reduces the impact of that imbalance.

The Government's twin White Papers on airline competition and airports policy set out a future in which Government support for the commercial development of aviation business would be strong, would develop and would build up competition. They envisaged a twin airports system and effective competition with foreign airlines. How is the Airlink decision helpful to British aviation in the light of those White Papers? Airlink was described in the BAA's 1978 report and accounts as:

"the symbol of London's twin airports policy."

[Mr. Nicholas Soames]

Surely, in Industry Year of all years, the Government should not have a policy of frustrating transport links.

This decision will end the productive and useful employment of a number of people. I should warn the House that, in my judgment, many more jobs are less secure because of what will prove to be a serious loss of revenue to British Caledonian.

The Minister's decision ignores the efforts made to meet objections in terms of changes of routeing and flights at higher altitudes. The environmental disturbance relating to that single source has been grossly overstated. Airlink represents only 20 per cent. of total helicopter movements in the west London area.

The French have an Airlink service between the Paris airports, despite the peripherique motorway. The cities of Tokyo and New York have helicopter linking services. Indeed, a British helicopter links Wall street with the New York airports. Houston has just introduced a city link helicopter service, for which landing fees have been waived for a specific period. Concorde aircraft do not meet any of the current noise requirements, yet they are permitted to operate charter flights from London Heathrow.

Surely it is discrimination of the worst possible kind when the S61 aircraft, which meets all the current and proposed noise emission standards for helicopters, is denied permission to operate. Where is the equity in that? Before the CAA, there were paraded a large number of professional witnesses who gave objective evidence on noise. Why, if the environmental issue was such a prime requirement, was that expert evidence ignored? Why has the Minister substituted his own beliefs for the expert evidence of others? The Secretary of State knows that a surface connection can never match the Airlink, and that the significant benefits of an airside connection will be lost.

The Speedlink coach service between 8 February and 3 May this year operated at about a 15 per cent. load factor. It carried, on average, six passengers per journey, at a time when there was no competition from Airlink, which stopped on 7 February. Before it stopped, Airlink, in competition with Speedlink, was operating at 50 per cent. load factors. The figures speak for themselves. How long will the Speedlink service continue at those passenger levels? Will my hon. Friend the Minister take steps to ensure that it continues?

Finally, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider carefully why British Caledonian needs this operation. He must ask himself why a private carrier would have fought so hard for so long—since 1978—and would have attracted so much adverse publicity at such considerable cost to itself in terms of time, effort and money, to operate the Airlink, unless it seriously and conscientiously believed in the route and its value and profitability—an objective endorsed by many respected users and organisations, including the Air Transport Users Committee.

British Caledonian has a record of successful operations. It has consistently made a profit. It creates jobs and provides a valuable boost to the United Kingdom economy. Is it right that, when it has suffered several times recently because of events over which it has no control, the Government now reward its endeavours by restricting it yet further? I greatly hope that my hon. Friend will, in equity and in accordance with Government aviation policy, permit the service to resume at once.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham) *rose*——

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I assume that the two hon. Gentlemen seeking to participate have the consent of both the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) and the Minister.

12.23 pm

Sir Peter Hordern: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) on choosing this subject, and on the forceful way in which he has put his case.

I feel sorry for British Caledonian that it has been treated so harshly. It could have expected and should have received much better treatment from the Government. It needed the helicopter link to continue its operations, and the Government should have allowed it much more time to experiment with different height levels to see whether the environmental objections could be overcome.

I am surprised at the decision of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, considering his decision about the Channel tunnel. We were told that it did not matter if a service was to be provided across the Channel, and was to be built by private enterprise. Environmental issues were swept to one side. He was in favour of an improvement in services for passengers who wished to cross the Channel. But this helicopter link will no longer be available to those who like to use Gatwick or Heathrow airports, and must change flights rapidly. That is sad.

In announcing this change in a written answer, my right hon. Friend said that he was minded to make the change because of the improved motorways and the improved coach services, which would be able to ply so rapidly between Heathrow and Gatwick. *The London Standard* said this evening that the Surrey police have said that traffic using the motorway between Heathrow and Gatwick can at times tail back 10 miles from the M25-M3 interchange, while a 14-mile tail back in the M3 traffic waiting to join the M25 has been recorded. Anyone who has experienced delay on the M25 can but wonder at the decision by my right hon. Friend.

As for using the motor coaches, and the new rapid means of transport that the M25 will allow, that can be described only as a figment of the imagination. This is sad decision, but I noticed that my right hon. Friend said that he would allow time for experiment, and if it were found that the transport difficulties in getting from Heathrow to Gatwick were great, he would consider allowing the helicopter link to return. I hope that his decision will be reversed soon.

12.26 am

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): As a consultant to British Caledonian, I know that the airline considers the helilink to be a vital element in developing services at Gatwick in competition with British Airways. The House will recall that that is basis of the Government's aviation policy, as outlined in a White Paper 18 months

ago. The decision that we are debating places a major impediment on British Caledonian in achieving the Government's objective.

All other cities with two or three airports are linked by helicopter, including Paris, New York and Tokyo. That shows that in other countries, although the same environmental consideration must surely apply, there is a considerable understanding of the need, when advancing aviation, to have such a helicopter link.

Whether or not we like it, the first class and business class passengers, which all airlines must attract if they are to maximise their revenue, simply will not use a coach service. The fact that they have to check in and out of customs and immigration if they are travelling from one airport to the other by road, which is not necessary with the helicopter link, undoubtedly reduces the ability of British Caledonian to continue to provide a competitive service.

Another small matter that may have been overlooked by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in reaching his decision is that in airline timetables throughout the world it is possible to include the time for a link run by a helicopter but not to include a coach service link.

The impression has been given that, as a result of the decision, the people immediately below the flight path of the British Caledonian helilink will be free from noise. However, it is estimated that no more than 20 per cent. of the total noise created by helicopters is created by this one. Even after the decision, some 80 per cent. of the noise will continue to be experienced. It is a pity that so much of the noise appears to be blamed on the British Caledonian helilink when private helicopters will continue to create a noise.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is well disposed to British Caledonian, and that he has frequently expressed considerable admiration for the way in which it has triumphed through many difficulties, and is now in a relatively profitable condition. I appeal to him. We need more than words—we need action. That action could, with great advantage, be an announcement by him to reconsider this decision, which flies in the face of all that British Caledonian has sought to do in recent years.

12.29 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): My hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) has been as eloquent and vigorous in support of his constituents' interest as he always is. In this case, he has emphasised the employment opportunities offered by British Caledonian. On that and other matters, my hon. Friend has been ably supported by my hon. Friends the Members for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) and for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern).

I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley said about the importance and excellence of British Caledonian. My hon. Friends have argued strongly for the retention of the helicopter link between Heathrow and Gatwick airports. I have to say what I am sure they already know—that many other hon. Members have argued no less passionately in the House and outside that the helicopter link should cease. The future of the helicopter link has become a highly controversial issue, the resolution of which was bound to invoke the anger of one side or the other.

The number of representations clearly illustrates the strength of feeling on both side about the issue. After publishing the application, the Civil Aviation Authority received 2,225 objections, of which 949 were within the deadline allowed by the regulations. At the hearing, the authority heard British Caledonian and the Air Transport Users Committee in support of the application, as well as 25 parties representing objectors. In addition, we have received about 1,000 representations, including many hon. Members, local authorities, airlines, airports, residents' associations, other local bodies and members of the public. We have received two petitions—one in support of the helicopter link and one opposed to it. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have met two deputations of hon. Members—again, one in support of the link and one opposed to it.

There has therefore been no shortage of information on which to base a decision. Naturally, we considered very carefully the Civil Aviation Authority's decision to grant British Caledonian's application, as well as the evidence submitted to the Authority, the transcript of the public hearing, and the representations made to us.

The decision which my right hon. Friend now has to take is whether to specify a date for the resumption of the Heathrow-Gatwick helicopter link, or whether instead to direct the Civil Aviation Authority not to issue a licence for the service in order to prevent the environmental disturbance caused by the helicopter. In reaching this decision, my right hon. Friend has to weigh the environmental disturbance against the economic benefits of allowing the helicopter link to continue, and this must include an evaluation of the alternatives available to passengers who wish to travel between Heathrow and Gatwick.

I shall deal first with the question of environmental disturbance to which the Civil Aviation Authority cannot give the same weight as the Secretary of State for Transport. Without doubt, there is widespread and intense opposition to the helicopter link on the grounds of the environmental disturbance that it causes. This opposition has been increased by two aspects of the present application. First, the proposal to operate the helicopter link over three routes has increased the number of people who will be affected by the environmental disturbance. Secondly, the firm expectation following from a previous decision that the helicopter link would cease four months after the opening of the M25 has produced dismay and anger among those who thought that the issue could not be re-opened. We are conscious that some of the claims about the environmental disturbance caused by the helicopter have been exaggerated—this point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley—but, even after making full allowance for this consideration, it remains the case that the helicopter link has caused, and would continue to cause, widespread and genuine annoyance and distress.

I now turn to the economic benefits of the helicopter link between Heathrow and Gatwick. We accept that British Caledonian, as well as other British airlines and the airports, earn valuable revenue from passengers interlinking over the London airport system. If such passengers are to continue to be attracted to the London airports system, there must be fast, frequent, comfortable and reliable links between Heathrow and Gatwick. Good links between the two airports will expand the choice of services available to travellers with their origins or destinations in the United Kingdom by enabling them to regard services from Heathrow and Gatwick as alternatives.

[Mr. Michael Spicer]

There is no doubt that, in the past, the helicopter link between Heathrow and Gatwick has proved a valuable facility for passengers wishing to travel between the two airports. But the value of the helicopter link has been reduced now that the M25 has opened up motorway travel between the airports. If I have time I shall address myself to the effectiveness of that motorway link.

The speedlink coach service, operated by London Country, provides a frequent service with a high standard of comfort on board the coach as well as dedicated lounges at the airport terminals. London Country also operates the cheaper, but still direct, Jetlink 747 service. Alternatively, passengers can make use of the taxis and self-drive hire cars. Some may now find it more attractive to use their own cars.

These services and facilities offer travellers between the two airports a good choice of speed, comfort, convenience and price. We accept that continuing the helicopter link would expand this choice still further. In particular, we recognise the convenience to interlining passengers of an airside to airside helicopter service. But we believe that the wide range of alternatives to the helicopter should prove acceptable to the majority of travellers between the airports, and we hope that certain improvements to them will enhance their attractiveness to interlining passengers.

It may be that a few interlining passengers will be discouraged from using the London airports system because of their own perceptions of road transport or because a few connections which were possible by helicopter will not be possible by road, or because with the helilink they are able to change airports without going through customs or immigration.

We have looked very carefully at the various estimates of how many interlining passengers might be lost to British Caledonian and other British airlines, and what that could amount to in terms of loss of revenue and profit.

While we would not wish to understate the possible loss, we believe that some of the claims that have been made have been exaggerated, and we hope that the potential loss could be kept to the minimum by all those concerned taking a positive and aggressive approach to promoting the alternative road connections.

Weighing those arguments against each other has not been easy. Having, however, considered all the arguments, the evidence and the representations with the greatest care, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced last week that he was minded to give the Civil Aviation Authority a direction preventing a resumption of the Heathrow to Gatwick helicopter link.

In our view, the environmental disturbance caused by the helicopter link can no longer be justified now that fast alternative connections are available which should prove acceptable to the majority of passengers wishing to travel between the two airports.

As required under section 6 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982, my right hon. Friend has consulted the Civil Aviation Authority before giving it a direction, and our officials have written to British Caledonian. The authority has said that it has no comments to make on the proposal that the Secretary of State should issue a direction.

We realise that the announcement will have come as a great disappointment to British Caledonian and to the many hon. Members and others who have supported the continuation of the helicopter link. It has not made our task any easier to know that, whatever my right hon. Friend decided, we would disappoint as many people as we satisfied. But it is the responsibility of Government to make hard choices, and we cannot shirk that.

My right hon. Friend made it clear in his statement that in certain circumstances he would be prepared to look again at the need for a scheduled helicopter service between Heathrow and Gatwick, if the question were to be referred to him at a future date.

Given that the balance between the environmental disturbance caused by the helicopter link and its economic benefits is fine, it would be wrong for us to suggest that the balance could never shift. For example—this was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley—there can be no guarantee that adequate surface links between the airports will be maintained in terms of speed, frequency and quality of the available services and facilities.

Nor should we rule out the possibility of operating an air link at some future date in such a way that significantly reduced the environmental impact. But any such reappraisal must be for the future, and after the alternatives to the helicopter link have had a year or two to prove themselves.

I very much hope that once my right hon. Friend has formally announced his decision, the issue will be accepted as closed, at least for the time being. The main task then will be to make the surface links work as well as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 14 May 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Small and Medium-Sized Firms

1. **Mr. Bright** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what his Department is doing to improve the export marketing of small and medium-sized British firms.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): The services offered by the British Overseas Trade Board provide valuable support for companies' export marketing. About three quarters of those using these services are smaller companies employing fewer than 200 people. The British Overseas Trade Board is currently running a series of conferences on export marketing throughout the United Kingdom, which are designed primarily for smaller companies and those new to exporting.

Mr. Bright: I welcome my hon. Friend's answer, but will he take it a step further? Bearing in mind that, in the latter half of this year, we shall hold the presidency of the EEC Commission, is it possible to get to grips with a situation in which many firms have to manufacture to different specifications for each European country? As a business man, I know how difficult it is for a small company to do that. What are the prospects of ironing out that problem?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is right. The essence of the internal market, which consists of 330 million consumers, is that there should be free circulation of goods without artificial impediments. The harmonisation of technical standards is one of the most important of those elements.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Why does the hon. Gentleman think that tiny companies in Italy — often cottage industries—can manufacture knitwear and other textile products which feed into large units and then into exports, but apparently we cannot cope with such a system here?

Mr. Clark: That simply constitutes a different approach to marketing. If British manufacturers do not adopt that approach, there must be very good reasons for it.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Is it not a fact that about 6,000 firms in this country with turnovers of between £1 million and £10 million a year do not export? Does my hon. Friend agree that this presents just the right target for the BOTB's attention?

Mr. Clark: It is perfectly true that breaking into export markets can be time-consuming and expensive. Many firms may find it more appropriate to wait for customers to come to them, and thus opportunities are lost. The BOTB's initiatives in this respect are extremely valuable. The board holds a number of conferences which are extremely well attended by business men at which it explains what facilities are available.

Mr. Evans: Why has there been such little progress in the harmonisation of technical standards in the EEC? Is it not a fact that the Europeans can apparently export goods to this country with impunity, but we cannot export to them?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member on the right question?

Mr. Evans: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is about technical standards.

Mr. Speaker: Is it about export marketing of small and medium-sized firms?

Mr. Evans: Yes, Sir. The Minister should answer.

Mr. Clark *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Couchman.

Mr. Couchman: My hon. Friend may care to know that a strong team from my borough of Gillingham has just visited Japan. The team included the chief executive, the leader of the council and people from the enterprise agency and the chamber of commerce. They made valuable contacts, but they were struck by the difficulties faced by firms, especially small companies, in penetrating that market. Is there not a case for the Department to set up a regular and consistent counselling service for small companies so that they gain expertise in this regard?

Mr. Clark: The British Overseas Trade Board does have such a service. I would very much like my hon. Friend to ask his delegation to communicate with my Department and report on what it found. I am doing my best to build up a picture of the various difficulties and restrictions faced by British exporters to Japan, and the more material that I can have presented the better.

Mr. John Smith: Will the Minister now kindly answer the question put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans), which was highly relevant to export marketing and technical standards, which, as the Minister should know, is very much at the heart of our potential export success? If he does not know the answer, will he just say so?

Mr. Clark: It is far too early for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to take this ludicrous and pompous line. He knows perfectly well that if Mr. Speker had wished me to answer that I would have done so. I cannot remember whether the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) was even in the Chamber when I answered the question initially. I said that the harmonisation of technical standards was the most important single element in the completion of the internal market.

Mr. Stokes: In spite of all the help which the Government are at present giving to firms in this country, does my hon. Friend agree that the prime responsibility is for the management of British firms? Firms in my constituency, which export all over the world, do not go to the Government with a begging bowl all the time.

Mr. Clark: I congratulate the firms in my hon. Friend's constituency. However, I do not think that we are talking about a begging bowl. We are talking about the

difficulties that many small firms experience in starting to export on their own account in the first instance. To help them with that, the BOTB is extremely useful.

Tin Mining Industry

2. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the latest situation within the tin mining industry.

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): The Department has received applications for assistance from Geevor and RTZ. We have already made it clear that we will give urgent consideration to projects designed to make the mines competitive in the new market situation.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Minister constantly bear in mind the importance of the tin industry to an area which already has severe unemployment and a fragile economy? Will the Government give an undertaking to help that area and the tin industry, and not turn their back on it as they have done with most other British industries, are about to do with the shipbuilders, and as the Minister for Trade did on the question from my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans)?

Mr. Morrison: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I know the area. I have visited the tin mines and have been down them. I am more than aware of the implications of those tin mines having to close. That is precisely why we are looking very carefully at the applications that have been put to our Department.

Mr. Harris: Will my hon. Friend accept my thanks for his response to my personal plea that the Government should find some money to enable Geevor's pumps to keep going while the application is being considered? When he considers the application from Geevor and from Carnon Consolidated, will he bear in mind the phrase from the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, when it said that it believed that the Cornish tin industry was worth saving, because the whole of Cornwall believes that as well?

Mr. Morrison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for referring to the fact that, with the Cornish county council, we have been able to provide a period of some four weeks to look at the development of Geevor tin mine's application. Certainly my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I will bear in mind what the Select Committee said on this important subject.

Mr. Penhaligon: Does the Minister have any idea how weak his answer to the fundamental question posed appears to those in Cornwall? We recognise that Government decisions sometimes take longer than many of us would desire, but some six and a half months have passed since the crisis started. There have been numerous meetings—I pay homage to the Minister for having the meetings—but no decision has appeared. People in the far south-west are wondering just when the Government expect to reach a conclusion. Can the Minister give us some idea of when he expects the review to be completed?

Mr. Morrison: With respect, the hon. Gentleman is being less than fair. He will be aware that RTZ put in its application less than two weeks ago. It is impossible to decide whether an application is viable until we receive it and look at it carefully. He should also be aware, after meetings that I have had with the trade unions, that they would want us to look at those applications very carefully and not rush them.

Mr. Williams: Nevertheless, it is six months since the Minister saw the crisis emerging. How much more governmental dither and indifference must Cornwall suffer? The Government have taken millions of pounds in regional aid from the south-west in the past few years, and plan to take millions more in the next few years. Is it not time that they put some of that money back?

Mr. Morrison: By the tone of his question, the right hon. Gentleman wants me just to say no without looking very carefully at the viability of the applications. I am looking carefully. I am encouraging the companies to come forward with viable applications. That is what they and the trade unions would want me to do.

European Regional Development Fund

3. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the value of the grants allocated to England from the European regional development fund since its inception?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): About £997 million.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend think that the size and extent of those grants has been sufficiently well publicised in this country? If not, what steps does he propose to take to ensure that the public are aware of the level of assistance that we receive from the fund?

Mr. Butcher: I think that there is awareness among the key clients of that area of expenditure, particularly among local authorities and those who bring forward applications for infrastructure investment. It is the major section of spending under this head of account. Obviously, we would look for methods of improving the publicity, particularly to the private sector applicants, but in the main we are satisfied that the volume of applications is being matched by the funds available.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Minister not agree that, in comparison with the scale of funds given out through the common agricultural policy, the funds given out for regional policy by the Community are very small indeed? What are the Government doing to seek to increase them, to help the regions where unemployment is so high?

Mr. Butcher: I do not think that the amount spent here is ungenerous. I accept the implication of what the hon. Gentleman is saying, that this area of spending has benefits for the United Kingdom which are greater than usual. I should inform the hon. Gentleman that the United Kingdom's share of the fund in 1985 was £345 million, representing about 26 per cent. of the total budget. In terms of applications, in 1986 the United Kingdom's share is about £376 million, which is about 19 per cent.

Mr. Hill: Will my hon. Friend confirm that applications will be made to the European development fund for the infrastructure that will be needed on this side of the Channel for the Channel tunnel? Is it not a fact that most of the funds seem to be earmarked for infrastructure? Would that not be a good thing?

Mr. Butcher: In the main, the areas that receive assistance from the fund coincide with our domestically

identified assisted areas. My hon. Friend raises a particularly interesting point. The best thing to do at this stage is to agree to look at that, given that it is an especially European—I stress European—venture.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Is the Minister not aware that, despite the figures he mentioned, regional aid has been halved under this Government, and is to be halved yet again? Was it the EEC that insisted that access to the assisted areas grant be restricted to 35 per cent. of the working population, or was it the Government who made that decision? Will the Minister consider an urgent review of the assisted areas map? Will he bear in mind that 3 million people are now in areas with unemployment rates of between 15 and 26 per cent., yet those areas receive no regional development grants and no regional selective assistance?

Mr. Butcher: I am grateful for the opportunity to restate the circumstances against which the 35 per cent. area coverage was brought about. During the Government's review of United Kingdom industrial regional aid in 1984, we were given to understand that if we were to seek Commission approval for an assisted area map covering more than 35 per cent. of the working population of Great Britain, the Commission saw little likelihood that it would approve that. Reductions might have been forced upon us to bring the coverage down to 35 per cent., or even less, which was likely. In the circumstances, the Government decided to set the map coverage at 35 per cent., and that was accepted by the Commission.

Mr. Forth: Has my hon. Friend made any estimate of the likely impact of the enlargement of the EEC to include Spain and Portugal on the United Kindom's share of the regional development fund? Does he agree that to attempt constantly to move economic resources around arbitrarily where they do not want to go is a futile exercise anyway?

Mr. Butcher: Where possible, these forms of assistance should be coloured by the needs of market forces. I understand my hon. Friend's point, but hon. Members on both sides of the House voted for Portuguese and Spanish accession to the Community, and it was almost inevitable that our share of the budget would fall.

Cable-producing Industry

4. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will discuss with relevant manufacturers the future of the United Kingdom cable-producing industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I would be happy to discuss with the industry any specific points it might wish to raise about its future. I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for bringing a delegation to see me yesterday.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Minister is aware of the closure by Sterling Greengate Cables of a factory in Trafford park in Manchester and the movement of some of that work to Aldermaston, where unemployment is much less of a problem than it is in the north-west. In his discussions with manufacturers, especially multinationals such as the one to which I referred, will the Minister point out, not only that they have social obligations to areas such as the north-west, but that the Government demand that their investment plans should include a recognition of the geographic dispersion of that investment?

Mr. Morrison: As I said to the hon. Gentleman when he raised the matter with me yesterday, regional grants are based on precisely the premise that he has advocated. I remind him that my constituency is about 30 miles down the road from Trafford park, which he represents and where many of his constituents work, so I understand his point.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Is my hon. Friend aware that the United Kingdom cable industry enjoys an excellent reputation throughout the world? It has contributed substantially to the United Kingdom export drive, but it is deeply worried about the EEC proposals on product liability, which it perceives to be very damaging, and which could assist non-EEC importers.

Mr. Morrison: I have looked into product liability. I should be happy to be told more about it, but I am assured that it need not be a problem for the industry.

Mr. Eastham: Do the Government have any strategy for the cable manufacturing industry, or do they intend to leave it to market forces? That would mean that the cheapest markets, irrespective of where they are, would take from Britain this industry, which is valuable and strategically important to it.

Mr. Morrison: I agree that the industry is important. That is why, in the aid and trade provision, substantial sums go indirectly, if not directly, to the cable industry. The hon. Gentleman is aware that substantial sums have been spent to attract new cable manufacturers to Britain. Only last week I visited a manufacturer in the north-east who was successfully using the most modern methods of production.

Financial Services (Provision)

5. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the progress towards the harmonisation of the provision of financial services throughout the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: My aim is freedom to offer a diversity of services. Progress towards the full achievement of this objective has been disappointingly slow. I hope it will now quicken, given the high priority attached to it by Community Heads of Government.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the greatest barriers to a true market in financial services throughout the EEC is the restrictive practices that exist in so many of those services in Britain and in other EEC countries? Will he bend his efforts towards persuading individual providers of services to reduce those restrictive practices as much as possible?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. We have already made progress in unit trusts. Recent judgments in the European Court will make it easier to advance in non-life insurance. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer hopes to carry forward the mortgage credit proposals that will allow building societies to invest in property outside their territory.

Sir John Farr: What attention is my hon Friend's Department giving to the unfair protection laws that exist in many Community countries, especially in Germany in respect of its domestic insurance markets?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend has identified a market that is proving to be especially difficult. The matter must be agreed in the Council of Ministers. Perhaps when majority voting is introduced it will be easier to make progress in that area.

Mr. Gould: Will the Minister bear in mind in any harmonisation exercise our unfortunate experience with the EEC listing particulars directive and ensure that any future harmonisation is attuned to the needs of our financial services industry, which is, after all, the most powerful in Europe?

Mr. Clark: I shall do my best to advance and nurture the interests of our financial services industry, but, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, each Minister will be endeavouring to achieve the best result for his domestic industry and it is that contest which makes these councils sometimes such a labourious business.

Research and Development

6. **Mr. Powley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much his Department is spending on support for research and development; and if he will give comparable figures for 1979-80.

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): My Department plans to spend £415 million in 1986-87 on support for research and development. The comparable figure for 1979-80 was £142 million.

Mr. Powley: I thank my hon. Friend for that informative answer, but does he agree that the Government have an important and continuing role in research and development alongside industry and commerce? What efforts have been made in the Norwich area in that direction?

Mr. Pattie: I agree with my hon. Friend. Under the support for innovation scheme, 11 projects worth over £8 million are being supported in the Norwich travel-to-work area with grants of nearly £1·4 million. The technologies supported include electrical engineering, food machinery and printing. One of the largest recipients of DTI support in the area has been Datron Electronics, which manufactures electronic test and measurement equipment. I plan to vist that company in the near future, and I look forward to seeing the results of my Department's support.

Mr. Lamond: In view of the tremendous success of the A320 Airbus, which managed to achieve 81 definite orders in the first 10 months of last year and employs about 30,000 people in Britain, is there any chance of some of that £405 million being given as a loan as a launch-aid and research and development aid to the A330 and A340?

Mr. Pattie: The hon. Gentleman is understating the case on the A320, which has already been the subject of launch-aid, because when I checked a few days ago there were about 130 orders with deposits.

I answered the question about the A330 and A340 on a previous occasion when I said that we await the discussions with British Aerospace and the Airbus consortium, which have yet to decide whether they want to proceed with those projects.

Mr. Pawsey: I appreciate what my hon. Friend has done for research and development, but what plans has he to encourage industry to do more R and D? Does he agree with mergers, for example between companies such as GEC and Plessey, which would then concentrate resources on research and development, to the benefit of the nation in penetrating export markets abroad?

Mr. Pattie: I am sure that my hon. Friend would not want me to comment on that particular example when it is still the subject of a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It is obviously advantageous to British industry to have certain centres of excellence within industry, and there can be advantages in some companies coming together to provide a scale that will enable them to compete in international markets. We would expect an increase in research in industry to come from an increase in improved profitability, and at present profitability levels are at their highest since 1973.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Will the Minister confirm, however, that under the important support for innovation scheme funds available have been cut this year and will be cut further next year? Is he aware that the Treasury attitude towards United Kingdom expenditure on research and development in Europe is damaging to British interests? Can he assure the House that United Kingdom contributions to such programmes as EUREKA and ESPRIT in Europe are not being offset by cuts in national United Kingdom programmes in Britain?

Mr. Pattie: Yes, I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance, because we have made it clear that EUREKA and ESPRIT programmes will be funded up to what industry regards as satisfactory levels. There is a planned reduction in the support for innovation scheme, because we have increased the provision on awareness programmes, technology transfer programmes, advisory services and industry education, by 25 per cent.

Commercial Vehicle Industry

7. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has for the future of the commercial vehicle industry in Britain.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The future of this industry, as of others, will be determined by market demand and its ability to compete.

Mr. Dalyell: What advice would the Minister give to a skilled man from Bathgate who wishes to continue his career somewhere in the British commercial vehicle industry?

Mr. Morrison: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am concerned about the position at Bathgate and I have made every possibility——

Mr. Canavan: Answer the question.

Mr. Morrison: I will answer the question.

I have made every possibility available to see whether there are new industries that will come, as has my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The hon. Gentleman will know that unless the truck industry becomes competitive there will be no truck industry, but there may be opportunities for the person to whom the hon. Gentleman referred at the Leyland Trucks plant.

Mr. Madel: Will my hon. Friend confirm that one way to secure thousands of jobs in our commercial vehicle

industry is to get more American investment? To that end, will he confirm that he is constantly reminding General Motors that more investment by that company in this country, especially in Bedfordshire, is not only beneficial for it, but is very beneficial for us?

Mr. Morrison: I can certainly confirm that the Bedford plant in Bedfordshire is very important indeed and that, over a long period, General Motors has invested substantial sums in that plant, which, until recently, has provided a healthy and viable industry and livelihoods for many thousands of employees.

Mr. Hoyle: What discussions did the Secretary of State have with Mr. Robert Stempel of General Motors when they met in New York on 4 May? Did they discuss Bedford and Leyland commercial vehicles? If not, what did they discuss, and will the Secretary of State make a statement?

Mr. Morrison: I am assured by my right hon. Friend that they did not meet.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Is my hon. Friend now reconciled to the fact that the future of Land Rover lies independently of Leyland and, one hopes, in the private sector? Will my hon. Friend encourage the new chief executive of Leyland to look at those possibilities?

Mr. Morrison: I am not reconciled to any particular facts about Land Rover, but I wish it every success in an expanding market place.

Mr. Terry Davis: If there are some doubts about jobs at Bedford, would not it be a good idea to consider the possibility of General Motors' van-making operation, which is losing money, being taken over by the the profit-making Freight Rover?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman will recall that he and I visited the Freight Rover plant in his constituency and I hope he recalls that I was impressed by what I saw.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my hon. Friend accept that many of us were obliged to the Government for seeing the sense of the argument that Land Rover, as a specialist manufacturer, should stay on its own, but will he also accept that many of us believe that rationalisation of our commercial vehicle industry is important and that most of us who were against the earlier plan would welcome General Motors, through its Bedford subsidiary, having sensible talks with Leyland Truck, so that a viable and prosperous truck industry can survive and thrive in this country?

Mr. Morrison: It is a welcome exception to get a pat on the back from my hon. Friend in this area, and I am most grateful to him. I am also most interested in my hon. Friend's concern for the future of the truck industry, which, as we have been saying constantly throughout this year, is most important indeed and about which difficult decisions will have to be made.

Mr. John Smith: Since, as the Minister well knows, from August 1984 until earlier this year the Government had a strategy to dispose of our commercial vehicles industry, or large sections of it, to American interests and that has now collapsed in a shambles, what is the Government's present strategy for the industry? Can the Minister tell us whether any talks are going on or are planned with any foreign interests to acquire any part of the British motor vehicle industry?

Mr. Morrison: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has been told on several occasions that the Government's strategy is to rationalise, where that is necessary, to ensure that there is a healthy and viable commercial vehicle industry. No talks are taking place.

Competitiveness

8. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the competitiveness of British industry.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): I welcome the increase in our share of world trade in manufactures last year, and the continuing improvement in our manufacturing productivity, but I cannot be satisfied as long as unit labour costs in manufacturing industry are rising faster in the United Kingdom than in our main competitor countries.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the profit-sharing proposals in the Budget should be of particular benefit to manufacturing and other companies which have to compete in world markets?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I hope that they will have some effect. I hope that those proposals, which I warmly welcome, will receive a good welcome from both sides of the House.

Mr. Evans: Does the Secretary of State ackowledge that the competitiveness of British industry would be greatly improved if it were operating on the same basic standards as those of our EEC competitors? Will the Secretary of State answer the question which his hon. Friend the Minister for Trade could not or would not answer, as to why has there been so little progress over the harmonisation of technical standards in the EEC and why it is that EEC countries can export to this country, although we cannot, apparently, export to them?

Mr. Channon: I should like to look at a specific example, because the situation varies from industry to industry. In general terms, I believe that quite a lot of progress is being made on the harmonisation of technical standards. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that it should proceed faster I agree entirely with him, but, alas, that is not entirely within our gift.

Mr. John Browne: Does my right hon. Friend accept that competitiveness depends crucially upon new products and that that in itself depends upon the birth of new and smaller businesses, which, under this Government, have never enjoyed a better environment? Does my right hon. Friend also accept that, to be truly competitive, our products must be designed properly, built with quality, delivered on time and given adequate after-sales service? Again, does he accept that under this Government the environment has never been better for encouraging competitiveness, particularly because of our firm exchange rate?

Mr. Channon: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend that the factors he has cited are crucial if British industry is to be more competitive. Immense strides have been made, but I remain worried about unit labour costs, which are extremely important and a major factor.

Mr. Haynes: When will the Secretary of State and the Government wake up to the fact that we cannot possibly

compete against other nations of the world, which receive heavy financial assistance from their Governments? When will this Government stop industry floundering around and collapsing right across the nation? When will they wake up and do something about it?

Mr. Channon: Most uncharacteristically, the hon. Gentleman exaggerates his case. In fact, the prospects for British industry are extremely good. The forecast for the economy is also extremely good. I look forward with confidence to the progress of British industry during the next few months.

Mr. Holt: Will my right hon. Friend note that, however competitive the furniture industry may be, it is impossible for it now to compete with the flood of furniture that is being imported from the Eastern bloc? It is undermining a very old and well-established industry in this country. If the Government do not take action, the industry will suffer a serious decline.

Mr. Channon: If there is evidence of dumping in the furniture industry, I shall be very glad to receive it and to take appropriate action.

Mr. Gould: Does the Secretary of State accept that the most widely used index of competitiveness, the IMF index of relative normalised unit labour costs, shows a loss of competitiveness since this Government took office of no less than 30 per cent.? Will he therefore have a word with his right hon. Friends about this? His right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is the latest culprit, after his appearance on television last Sunday. All those Ministers constantly, and wrongly, assert that competitiveness has improved under this Government. Will he give the facts to them so that they cease making false and misleading statements?

Mr. Channon: We are doing well on productivity and we are doing well in industry. The forecast for the economy is good, GDP is now entering its sixth successive year of growth and investment is at a record high. The Labour party's attempts to diminish these achievements are very misleading and undesirable.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Minister recognise that real interest rates in Britain are still higher than in competitor nations? Is he aware that our inflation rate is still the second highest in Europe — ahead only of Italy — and that wage rates here are much higher than in competitor countries? Does he accept that unless he does something more effective — for instance, by joining the European monetary system and imposing more effective wage restraint — *[Interruption.]* — those three factors will continue to undermine the competitiveness of British industry?

Mr. Channon: We shall all want to study with care what the hon. Gentleman said in the last part of his question, which did not seem to meet with universal approval. I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's views on wage rates and wage restraint. I hope that we shall soon have good news about inflation. The news on inflation is becoming better and better, and long-term interest rates are at their lowest for 14 years.

Mr. Roger King: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one way to improve the further competitiveness of British industry is to remove the penal rating which many Labour authorities throughout the country are levying on British industry? According to the Birmingham chamber of commerce and industry, £55 million extra is being spent by industry and 10,000 jobs have been lost. Is it not time that we did something about the rate system?

Mr. Channon: I agree with my hon. Friend. He is right to draw our attention to the fact that high and excessive rates imposed by Labour councils can cause damage to industry throughout the country.

National Educational Resouces Information Service

9. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the aims and the objectives of the national educational resources information service.

Mr. Butcher: The national educational resources information service is a computer-based service for schools. It will provide information on educational resource material directly relevant to the school curriculum and is designed to assist teachers. It is interactive and can be accessed by means of a local telephone call.

As my hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology announced at the press briefing on 28 April, the service will be available from January 1987. It is being financed for three years by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Lawler: I thank my hon. Friend for spelling out the detail on that service, which I am sure will be welcomed by all teachers. To ensure that there is wide usage, can my hon. Friend ensure that individual teachers are told clearly how they can gain access to the information database?

Mr. Butcher: There is a considerable degree of marketing of the scheme. I know that my hon. Friend takes a close interest in the training of young people and in maximising their chances of finding employment. Provided that schools have a modem attached to their existing or new micro-computers they can gain access to the central database very easily, for the cost of a local telephone call.

British Leyland

10. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the future of British Leyland's truck and bus divisions.

Mr. Peter Morrison: A number of possible offers for Leyland Bus are being considered by the BL board and my right hon. Friend expects to receive a recommendation shortly. The position regarding Leyland Trucks is as he announced in his statement on 25 March.

Mr. Atkins: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of my constituents will this weekend be celebrating the 90th anniversary reunion of the company's activities? What message can I give to them about the uncertainties facing the bus and truck industry so that their future may be resolved and so that I shall be present at their celebration of 100 years?

Mr. Morrison: If I was not aware as little as five years ago, I have been made perfectly aware by my hon. Friend of the importance of Leyland truck and bus divisions to his constituency. He will appreciate that both bus and truck

industries are in difficulties. Difficult decisions will have to be taken. If they are taken correctly, a viable bus and truck industry will be ensured.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Leyland National bus plant at Workington survive?

Mr. Morrison: That depends on what recommendation the BL board makes to my right hon. Friend. I am more than aware from the hon. Member how important an industrial unit is the bus plant in Workington.

Sir Hector Monro: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind repercussions far afield from the plant at Leyland? Does he realise that an important, modern and small construction engineering plant in my constituency will be gravely at risk if the Workington plant closes? Will he do all that he can, under whatever ownership, to ensure that that plant and others continue satisfactorily into the future?

Mr. Morrison: I can assure my hon. Friend that when any decisions are made about any part of the vehicle sector, the component suppliers and the implications for their future are taken carefully into account.

Mr. Park: Does the Minister accept that the continuing uncertainty created in British Leyland by the examination and re-examination of the corporate plan must be overcome as quickly as possible? Is there not now to be another examination under the new chairman, who not only has to pass an opinion on the corporate plan, but first has to inform himself about the industry?

Mr. Morrison: On the latter point, I have every confidence in what Mr. Graham Day will do as chairman and chief executive of BL. I understand the hon. Gentleman's former point. However, he will know and appreciate that during the period of uncertainty the percentage share of the market for trucks actually went up.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: Is my hon. Friend aware that in 1970 the BL truck division was the largest manufacturer of trucks in the world? Is he further aware that, despite recent advances, it has since declined to become the smallest of the major truck manufacturers in Europe? Therefore, is it not becoming increasingly apparent that the opposition to the Bedford-Land Rover — Leyland merger was opportunist, anachronistic and wholly ill-informed?

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend has put his finger somewhere near the button. I would call it political pot-stirring of the highest order.

Competition Policy

11. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received regarding competition policy.

Mr. Channon: I receive regular representations on competition policy from hon. Members and others.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the concern about the growing practice of companies which are the subject of competing takeover bids to collaborate, on a rather cosy basis, with the management's preferred suitor to plan a programme of asset disposals, the sole purpose of which is avoidance of a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

Mr. Channon. I am aware of that, and also of the public comment about it. My concern has been to make references primarily on competition grounds. That has been the case since 1984 when my right hon. Friend, now the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, announced the results of his review. I think that, in general, it is working well, but I shall certainly bear in mind my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Flannery: Is not British industry's state of collapse because of its failure to compete due to Government policy? British Shipbuilding is in such a dilemma. Is it not true that money on a grand scale is going from this country into the coffers of our competitors? When the Japanese Government see an aspect of their industry in trouble, do not massive subventions of cash go into that industry to corner the market and flood the world with goods? This Government sit still and let our industry reach a state of collapse.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is not expressing the facts about British industry. As I said earlier, its prospects are extremely good. That is generally recognised both inside and outside the House.

Mr. Favell: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied with the competitive position of Austin Rover, which during the first four months of this year saw its home market share drop to a disastrous 16 per cent.? Therefore, is it not time to re-open talks with Ford of Great Britain?

Mr. Channon: No, Sir, I have no plans to do that. However, I understand my hon. Friend's understandable concern about the competitive position of Austin Rover. It has good products coming along and it has made great strides, especially in Europe. I hope that hon. Members have noted the increase in percentages there. I am sure that under Mr. Graham Day and his board every effort will be made to improve the company's position still further.

Mr. Ryman: This question is about competition policy. Is the Minister really satisfied with the unsatisfactory state of affairs in a number of recent hostile takeover bids? Does he not appreciate that there is complete uncertainty about the attitude of the Director General of Fair Trading as to what bids are or are not referred? The system seems to follow no logical principle to protect the public interest. Was not the most glaring recent example the Distillers-Argyll-Guiness battle, which has baffled experts on both sides?

Mr. Channon: I make no comment on the last part of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question. On his general point, I do not think that there is uncertainty in the market. As I have tried to explain to the House—I think that this is well understood outside — references are made primarily on competition grounds. That has been my practice during my short period in office as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and that was the practice of my predecessors from 1984.

Mr. Nelson: In the context of competition policy, will my right hon. Friend consider whether it is desirable that we should have a decreasing number of major joint stock banks? Does he consider it to be in the interests of borrowers, depositors and the public at large that the number should be decreasing and that such major takeovers as are currently proposed — for example, Standard Chartered Bank and Lloyds — should be allowed to go ahead in an untrammelled way?

Mr. Channon: I note what my hon. Friend says. I do not think that he will expect me to make a comment on a specific case at present, as it is a matter that I may be called upon to decide. I take note, however, of what he says.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Secretary of State agree that many of the mergers that have taken place in recent times have been little to the benefit of the work force, customers or the public interest, and have been based largely on the self-aggrandisement of those who own the companies or those making the bids? Does that not illustrate the ineffectiveness of the Government's competition policy? Will he consider changing the basis of it so that those making bids have to prove the benefits that might flow from them?

Mr. Channon: I should be reluctant to make that change. I do not agree with most of what the hon. Gentleman said in his supplementary question, but I believe that there is a need for certainty and consistent policy. This is an area of policy which is difficult and needs study, and I am considering all aspects of it.

EUREKA

12. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what benefits he hopes to accrue to the United Kingdom from the EUREKA initiative.

Mr. Pattie: EUREKA is benefiting us both by increasing the opportunities for British firms to collaborate with European partners in developing new technology, and by focusing attention on the need for action to open up and integrate the European market.

Mr. Bellingham: In spite of the unfortunate name, may I congratulate the Government on adapting the initiative to British requirements by turning it into a market-led programme, which should create new and real jobs? Will he do all that he can to ensure that small firms, especially those in Norfolk, are able to benefit from the programme?

Mr. Pattie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. The flexibility of the EUREKA framework allows projects of differing sizes, and small firms with specialist skills are well placed to participate. I am encouraged by the extent to which they have shown interest.

Mr. Dalyell: Was it not concern about the future of the EUREKA project that partly prompted the gravest doubts on the part of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), which were overcome only when on Thursday 5 December at 9 am he, along with the Secretary of State for Defence, were summoned separately to No. 10 Downing street to be told that if those doubts were not overcome they could like it, lump it or go? Was that not the truth of the situation?

Mr. Pattie: I have not the faintest idea what the hon. Gentleman is talking about.

Manufactured Goods

13. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the latest balance of trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the first quarter of this year there was a deficit of £1·4 billion.

Mr. Canavan: How can the Government claim that their economic policies are a success when they have been responsible for the worst manufacturing trade deficit in British history? Bearing in mind that the deficit has existed continuously since the 1983 general election, will the Minister admit that we shall probably never see a manufacturing trade surplus again until this incompetent Tory Government are replaced at the next general election by a Labour Government who are committed to industrial regeneration and the growth of exports?

Mr. Clark: I am just as anxious as the hon. Gentleman to see a manufacturing trade surplus. The wealth of a nation is measured by its gross domestic product, which is composed of many different elements. The hon. Gentleman's supplementary question does less than service to our manufacturers, whose exports in 1985, both by volume and by value, were higher than ever before.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Does my hon. Friend share my alarm at the fact that the deficit in trade with the EEC in the first quarter of the year, at £2·8 billion, was the highest ever recorded and is equivalent to almost 1 million job losses? Why do we find it so difficult to make good trading arrangements with the Common Market as compared with the rest of the world?

Mr. Clark: My understanding is that the exceptionally high deficit in the first quarter of this year reflects trade in the more erratic items.

Mr. Pike: When will the Government realise that we shall never solve the country's financial problems until we get our trade in manufactured goods back into surplus? When will they realise that people in the north-west, who depend heavily on manufacturing industries, will never be got back to work unless the Government change direction and get our manufacturing industries back into surplus?

Mr. Clark: Trade in manufactures is but one element in the overall picture of trade. The overall surplus reflects revenues from oil, a surplus in services and the money from increasing manufactured goods and exports. We spend on imports of intermediate goods to fuel growth, on capital goods to invest for the future and on consumer goods to enhance freedom of choice.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend agree that his original answer was somewhat disappointing to those of us on the Tory side of the House who feel that genuine wealth is created by manufacturing industry and that it is upon manufacturing industry that service industries depend? In view of the somewhat unsatisfactory results in the by-elections and local government elections last week, will my hon. Friend prevail on our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and on Treasury Ministers to give manufacturing the emphasis and priority which it deserves, to stand up for British manufacturing industry in the arenas of the world and to provide fair rather than unfair competition?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is entirely right. It is a principal objective of the Government and this Department to ensure fair conditions of trading. In fair conditions, I am confident that, provided British manufactures are competitive — much of their decline, it must be admitted, rests in that they have lost competitive quality in several respects — they will advance. As I told the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), manufacturing exports increased by 5·5 per cent. last year.

Mr. John Smith: Is the Minister aware how serious it is that, in the first quarter of 1986, we have had a balance of trade deficit on manufactured goods as high as £1·4 billion? What do the Government intend to do to reduce our balance of trade deficit in manufactured goods, bearing in mind that, as the oil balance deteriorates, it will become a much more serious problem? Why, if the so-called erratic items were so important, was no reference made to them when the trade figures were published, or is this the hon. Gentleman taking a semi-detached view of the matter?

Mr. Clark: I do not think that it was thought necessary to make any special reference to what were only exceptional figures for one quarter.

Support for Marketing Initiative

14. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his Department's Support for Marketing initiative.

Mr. Butcher: This new advisory service will be introduced by the Department later this year. It is intended to assist and encourage small and medium-sized firms to develop or improve their marketing strategies by offering financial assistance for up to 15 man days' expert consultancy in this important area of their operations.

Mr. Page: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree with the old adage which runs, "If you don't tell you don't sell"? What reassurances can he and the Government give that the new initiative will not suffer from the shortage of funds which has unfortunately affected the business and technical advisory service?

Mr. Butcher: Some of Britain's critics have sometimes said that, although we might be excellent at developing products, we are perhaps not so good at marketing them. The scheme is a response to those who requested an enhancement of training and consultancy, especially small and medium-sized companies. I understand that success has caused the problem of queues in the business and technical advisory service, especially as we have multiplied by five times the amount of money that is spent on that general scheme during the past four years. I take my hon. Friend's point. We shall act to ensure that the queues are shortened.

Companies (Political Funds)

Mr Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation that would require companies to ballot their shareholders on whether a political fund should be established to make political donations.

Mr. Channon: No, Sir.

Mr. Winnick: As the Government were so insistent that trade unions should have to ballot their members every 10 years about whether a political fund should be established or maintained, why should the same not apply to companies? Is the Minister aware that a recent MORI poll found that 82 per cent. of the people surveyed believe that companies should be treated in the same way as trade unions? Did the Minister say no simply because the bulk of the money goes from companies to the Tory party and its front organisations?

Mr Channon: No. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that there are completely different factors relating to trade unions and companies. Shareholders have complete freedom of choice to invest their money, but many trade union members have no choice, and, even now, are forced to join a union to get a job. Moreover, we all know how misleading the trade union campaign was on political fund ballots. The two matters are not in any way analogues, and it would be wrong to legislate.

Mr. Sumberg: Is it not a fact that every company must have an annual general meeting, and that at that meeting the shareholders can accept or reject the donations? The fact that they rarely, if ever, do, proves that British industry and shareholders want a Conservative Government returned at the general election because they know that if the Opposition were returned it would be a disaster.

Mr. Channon: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I am glad that British industry shows that common sense.

British Shipbuilders

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

As the House will know, British Shipbuilders won only 23,000 compensated gross tonnes of orders last year. This was little more than a tenth of the amount forecast in its corporate plan. This was not for lack of Government support. The financial support for individual orders is not the problem. The problem is that orders are simply not there to be won. In Sweden, for example, which a few years ago had one of the most modern merchant shipbuilding industries in the world, the entire industry is closing down. This reflects the latest downturn in the shipbuilding market, which has resulted in capacity reductions and redundancies across the world. Despite Government support of over £1,400 million since 1979 and the recent increase in the level of support for new orders, it has proved impossible for British Shipbuilders to maintain its current capacity in the absence of new orders.

British Shipbuilders has, therefore, today announced measures which deal with this over-capacity. They include a decision to close by the end of the year, Smith's Dock, the Troon shipyard of Ferguson-Ailsa, and the Wallsend site of Clark Kincaid. In addition, British Shipbuilders has, as part of its wage negotiations, proposed a two-year deal which will seek to match manpower and capacity more closely to demand. The Government regret that these necessary measures will lead to total redundancies of some 3,500 people by March 1987. British Shipbuilders hopes that a substantial number of these will be achieved by voluntary redundancy.

The Government propose to provide British Shipbuilders with immediate support of up to £5 million in the current financial year to enable it to set up a new subsidiary, British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd. This will provide expert and practical services for those facing redundancy. It will ensure that they have at their workplace counsellors with the skills and resources to guide them towards retraining and redeployment opportunities, and to provide financial support to take advantage of those opportunities. It will also offer financial help and advice to those wishing to take the initiative of setting up their own businesses.

In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has asked the Manpower Services Commission to provide a further £1 million specifically for the retraining of redundant employees of British Shipbuilders in direct co-operation with the new enterprise corporation. He will also make available £1 million via the City Action Team for job creation measures and to stimulate enterprise in the north-east.

The community programme is already being expanded in the north-east from its present level of 22,000 jobs to 29,000 jobs at an extra cost of some £30 million. My right hon. Friend has asked the Manpower Services Commission to explore urgently new ways in which the resources of the community programme and the enterprise allowance scheme can be used in order to lead to permanent jobs in the north-east.

In addition to these measures, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has reviewed the derelict land reclamation and urban programmes in the areas affected—*[Interruption.]* I had thought that this matter was of some interest to the north-east.

At £13 million, the reclamation programme in the north-east region this year is already substantial, but it will be increased by a further £1 million. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State also proposes to allocate an extra £2 million under the urban programme, adding to the region's £35 million programme this year. British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd. will also operate in Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will consider urgently additional measures to help the areas affected by the redundancies announced today.

The measures that I have outlined will be in addition to the existing regional aid programmes, including assistance via English Industrial Estates for which the areas concerned are already eligible.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Is the Secretary of State aware that the chilling and desperate news contained in that statement will cause not only dismay but deep anger throughout the shipbuilding areas? Is he not ashamed to come to the House to announce 3,500 redundancies? Why did he not tell us about redundancies in particular yards — *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may not like it, but they will have to listen to it. Why did the Secretary of State not tell the House that there would be 495 redundancies at Govan Shipbuilders? Why did he not tell us that there would be more than 900 redundancies at Austin and Pickersgill, and Sunderland Shipbuilders? Why was that information not given to the House? Was he ashamed to give the details?

Is the Secretary of State aware that the collection of small sums which he has offered to the House in a desperate passing of the hat around Government Departments amounts to no more than putting tiny pieces of sticking plaster over gaping wounds? Is he aware that that money is just a pittance compared with the tens of millions of pounds taken away from those areas by the halving of regional development grants in the past few years? Does the right hon. Gentleman not now think that the decision to hive off and sell the naval shipyards, thus breaking up the integrated nature of the British shipbuilding industry, was, as a former chairman declared this morning, a "national disgrace"?

The Secretary of State spoke about the Government having helped, but why did they not intervene to ensure that British Nuclear Fuels plc, in whose company they were the majority shareholder, ordered the fifth nuclear carrier from British shipyards just like the previous four had been ordered, instead of allowing the order to go to Japan? Why do the Government not have a programme of bringing forward public sector orders to ensure that ships that will need to be built some day are built now, while our shipbuiding industry is still capable of building them? Why do the Government not urgently reassess the systems and packages of support so that British Shipbuilders has as good a package of support as any other shipbuilding firm in the world?

Why do the Government not set up a special task force, charged with the job of ensuring that our British shipbuilding industry survives? It is clear that in 1986

British merchant shipbuilding will either survive or disappear. On the evidence so far, the Government are completely indifferent as to which.

Mr. Channon: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong on almost all points. I do not think that British shipbuilding is on the verge of disappearing. It is important that we should try to take the necessary steps to keep merchant shipbuilding going in this country. The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked about public sector orders. Some are expected soon, including a fisheries protection vessel and two small ferries for Scotland, for which both British Shipbuilders and other British private sector yards are tendering.

The House must understand that further public sector orders cannot be conjured out of thin air if there is no need for them. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is misleading the House and the country if he imagines that there is some pool of public sector orders that are desperately needed and that can easily be brought forward. That is not the case. He would also mislead the House if he were to give the impression that this is a British problem; it is a worldwide problem. If the House wants details of the redundancy figures I gave, I can simplify them, but I have already told the House the unfortunate total of redundancies.

As to our subsidies being competitive, as a whole, subsidies available to British Shipbuilders match those available elsewhere. It is quite misleading to make comparisons of the credit available without comparing direct production subsidies. It is essential that we do our best to help the industry. It is not good enough for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to misrepresent the position that exists all over the world.

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is not a money problem but a worldwide problem? There is throughout a lack of shipbuilding orders caused by the calamitous state of the shipping industry worldwide. I welcome the palliatives which my right hon. Friend has announced and offer my congratulations regarding the British Shipbuilders enterprise corporation. Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is essential that this country continues to have a merchant shipping capability? We must continue to have some fundamental level of shipbuilding capability. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that we must maintain research and development facilities in British Shipbuilders, because the future lies in specialist and complicated vessels?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I agree. As my hon. Friend said in the second part of his question, it is important that facilities for research and the appropriate technology are both available. My hon. Friend said that it is a worldwide problem. I have already cited the example of Sweden. I shall cite also the example of Japan. For nearly 10 years, the Japanese have had to cut capacity. They are now considering reductions of one third in the larger yards. They have already laid off 10,000 people. To give the impression that it is solely a British problem is wholly misleading.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Minister aware that there are orders available in the world, that 13 million tons of orders were placed worldwide last year, and that we won orders for only 20,000 CGT? The orders are there and we are not getting them. [HON. MEMBERS: Why not?] Why do not the Government spend money on helping us to get orders instead of spending it to pick up the pieces of unemployment? Is the Minister aware that Govan Shipbuilders, which has suffered 500 redundancies today, is interested in orders from China for container ships and in a ferry order? However, it can get those orders only if there is a sufficient package of Government support. That is what we are asking for today.

Mr. Channon: The right hon. Gentleman's point about Chinese container ships is entirely right. We are prepared to offer the appropriate amount of mixed credit to make that possible. The House must understand that, in trying to get orders, it is not just a question of subsidy. There is a desperate shortage of orders worldwide. The United Kingdom is offering the same sort of credit as other countries offer — fully competitive packages. British Shipbuilders is doing its best to win the orders. One does it a disservice by demeaning what it is trying to do.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): I refer my right hon. Friend to the Appledore shipyard in north Devon, which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills), who is absent today due to sickness. Workers at that shipyard live both in my hon. Friend's constituency and in my constituency of Devon, North. Although 650 workers may seem a small number, their redundancies will be a huge, catastrophic occurrence for our area. On the subject of reviewing the boundaries of regional aid and access to European funds, does my right hon. Friend agree that the time to take action is now rather than delay further while matters get worse?

Mr. Channon: I shall certainly consider what my hon. Friend has said, although the question of where the boundaries should be drawn raises difficult problems. I hope that the effect in Appledore will not be too severe.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Does the Secretary of State accept that we are seeing a decimation of our shipbuilding industry? If it is a worldwide problem, why has the Conservative party, since it came to office in 1979, done little to work with other Governments to stimulate world trade and to increase the demand for shipping? If the industry has been facing massive problems, why have the Government deflected it from the major market, construction and manufacturing problems facing it with the re-organisation and the privatisation programme?

As for the north, especially in the Cleveland area where Smith's Dock is to be closed, will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance, in addition to the ad hoc measures which he has mentioned, that he will support financially the proposal by the Northern CBI, the Northern TUC and others for a northern development company?

Mr. Channon: I shall of course consider the hon. Gentleman's last point. He must face up to the fact that this is a problem of the shipbuilding industry not only in Britain but all over the world. The hon. Gentleman implied that the Government had neglected shipbuilding. I have already told the House that, since 1979, there has been Government support of more than £1·4 billion. If that is neglect, I should like to know what is not.

Mr. James Tinn (Redcar): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, in the 20-odd years in which I have been a Member, I have watched with admiration the first-class work of the men and management at Smith's Dock in my

[Mr. James Tinn]

constituency? Their achievements were confirmed as recently as last November in a letter from Graham Day, the then chairman of British Shipbuilders, in which he discounted rumours of future closures. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that this announcement is a shabby return for all their sterling work? Does he agree that the ameliorative measures which have been announced amount to little more than a contribution to the funeral expenses of an important sector of the British shipbuilding industry? If reports that the Cubans are looking for four or five vessels—depending on the finance available—are correct, will the right hon. Gentleman see to it that British yards are able successfully to tender for them?

Mr. Channon: I understand and sympathise very much with the hon. Gentleman's comments. I recognise his understandable feelings at this difficult time. I do not think that any Cuban orders have yet been won. Negotiations are taking place, but I do not want to be drawn into the details. It would obviously be a great help to British Shipbuilders and yards in the United Kingdom if they won the Cuban orders. I shall certainly bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's points.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this problem has been brought about not because of Government dereliction but because of the world crisis in shipbuilding—a crisis which he has faced up to with positive courage? Does my right hon. Friend agree that his package of nearly £10 million of extra aid will be widely welcomed in the north-east? Will he consider appointing a Minister to oversee the way in which that money is spent so that it does not fall into the hands of unaccountable and unelected organisations?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments about the assistance that the Government hope to give in the affected areas. It is not for me to appoint a Minister to undertake that task. However, I am sure that we shall have to devise effective ways of ensuring that the money is spent in the best possible way to help in this difficult situation.

Mr. James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Does the Minister appreciate that many of us believe that it is an act of folly for an island—not Sweden—which imports and exports 90 per cent. of its trade to allow its shipbuilding industry to be almost destroyed? Whether or not orders are there to be won — the right hon. Gentleman says that they are not and, of course, we must accept that — do the Government believe that it is essential to preserve a viable shipbuilding industry of considerable size? If it is necessary to adopt a scrap-and-build policy, as was done earlier, to meet the needs of a temporary problem, why not do that? What are the right hon. Gentleman's comments on the national position of our shipbuilding industry?

Mr. Channon: I understand, and to some extent share, the right hon. Gentleman's view. It is extremely important that we have a merchant shipbuilding industry. I think that the right hon. Gentleman will pay me credit for trying to achieve a situation in which the industry is viable.

I am afraid that if British Shipbuilders keeps everything open the industry's financial position will worsen, not improve.

I believe that the merchant shipbuilding industry is in a position to survive and will survive. I do not believe that the scrap-and-build process that the right hon. Gentleman has advocated was a success, but obviously we are considering every step that can be taken.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this lack of orders has caused a serious situation in Scotland, especially at Govan Shipbuilders and the Ferguson-Ailsa yard at Troon? Will he say a little more about how the British Shipbuilders enterprise corporation money will be shared out? Will there be adequate allocations for Scotland? Will there be discussions with the Scottish Development Agency, taking into account the successful work of the British steel industry in similar circumstances, which has brought many valuable jobs to the west of Scotland?

Mr. Channon: I think that I can give all those assurances to my hon. Friend. The British Shipbuilders enterprise corporation will operate in Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is considering additional measures, and I shall ensure that everything that my hon. Friend has said is drawn to his attention.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Secretary of State accept that the House will be perplexed that not one of the new initiatives announced today will save shipbuilding jobs? Does he accept that merchant shipbuilding is on the point of collapse? If so, what new measures does he intend to announce today?

Mr. Channon: I do not accept that it is on the verge of collapse. It is an extremely difficult situation, which is why these measures have to be taken. Further yards remain, and I very much hope that they will survive.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his depressing statement is a logical consequence of the very rapid decline in the British merchant fleet, about which the Government have been warned consistently from both sides of the House, especially by my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) and myself? Even at this late hour, will my right hon. Friend and the Government take some of the measures taken by other countries to support their merchant navies? If we support the merchant navy we may get some orders for our shipbuilders.

Mr. Channon: I certainly take note of my hon. Friend's point. I shall discuss it with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Does the Secretary of State realise that what he has just announced means 3,500 highly skilled men going on the streets? A few community jobs and derelict land schemes will not save the valuable skills of this maritime nation. When will the Minister take some notice of what has been said by the Oppositon since 1979 about the decline in merchant shipping and the British shipbuilding industry? When will he come forward with something constructive? What he has announced today will do nothing for the British shipbuilding industry.

Mr. Channon: I have been trying to announce steps that will help the difficult position faced by the House and the shipbuilding industry. It is a serious situation, as the hon. Gentleman knows better than anybody. He also knows better than anybody that the problems facing the

shipbuilding industry are worldwide and not confined to Britain. Such problems are faced by many countries and they have taken similar steps. It is foolish, misleading and unfair to suggest that we could take steps to get out of this position when other countries have not been able to.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Although I accept that today's announcement is the accumulation of years of neglect and the lack of orders, does my right hon. Friend accept that the closure of Smith's Dock in Langbaurgh, with the current high level of unemployment, will be much worse than anywhere else in the country? Therefore, will he take whatever steps he can, and say whether the £5 million he has announced is a limited figure or whether, once that has been used, further moneys will be made available? What steps will be taken to assist those people who would like to relocate to areas where work is available from an area where the house prices are the lowest in the country? Any form of help will be most welcome to my constituents.

Mr. Channon: I understand my hon. Friend's views. I hope that the amount of money announced today will be sufficient, but, of course, we shall keep the matter continually under review.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Is the Minister aware that the decision by British Shipbuilders to close the Ferguson-Ailsa yard at Troon, making 350 people redundant in this already high unemployment black spot, will increase male unemployment to nearly 40 per cent. and will put the final nail in the political coffin of the Secretary of State for Defence, who represents that area? Will the Minister consult the Secretary of State for Scotland to see whether the present orders for two ferries for the Scottish sea routes and one replacement vessel for the fisheries protection fleet that the Minister spoke of today can be directed to Ferguson-Ailsa in order to keep the yard open and ensure the future of the Port Glasgow and Troon shipyards?

Mr. Channon: I shall not comment on what the hon. Gentleman said in the first half of his question. As to the second half, the orders will have to go out to tender and competition in the normal way. A great many yards would like to have those orders.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As shipbuilding is a cyclical industry, will the Minister take steps to preserve the facilities at Smith's Dock and Ferguson-Ailsa for a possible recovery? Can he understand the feelings of those who work in shipbuilding, as I did before coming to the House, who are just a bit sick when we see that the total amount of cash provided for next year is equivalent to what we are paying every four days to subsidise agriculture and produce items that nobody wants because there is acute world over-capacity?

Mr. Channon: That may well be so, but surely my hon. Friend agrees that this is not so much a cash as an orders problem. There is a lack of orders for ships all over the world, including this country. That is well understood.

Mr. Taylor: Who wants to buy agriculture?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend talks about this being a cyclical industry. All the forecasts that I have seen remain extremely gloomy about the industry for a long time.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In the light of the decision to close the Troon yard of Ferguson-Ailsa, may I point out to the Secretary of State that it is absolutely crucial that the fisheries protection vessel to be ordered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Caledonian MacBrayne passenger ferry come to Ferguson-Ailsa in Port Glasgow, or the firm will disappear altogether? Has the right hon. Gentleman's Department informed the Associated Container Line that assistance can be obtained for the enlargement of its four vessels by way of the home credit scheme? There are orders there if the right hon. Gentleman's Department gets to its feet and helps British Shipbuilders to look for them.

Mr. Channon: On the hon. Gentleman's final point, that is well known, but I shall have to have that matter specially looked at. On his first point about the fisheries protection vessel and the ferries, it will be extremely important which yards those orders go to. British Shipbuilders and other yards are tendering for them now. I think that the only fair thing is for them to go out to tender in the normal way.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Is it not the depressing reality that there are too many modern ships chasing too little cargo and that, consequently, freight rates are at an historic low? That means that there is too little money to invest in new ships and too little incentive to do so. Is my right hon. Friend aware that many ships that are being built now will be laid up as soon as they emerge from the yards?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend shows graphically the real problems that face shipping and the shipbuilding industry—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must say to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that none of what he is saying is going into *Hansard*, so it does not help us.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Why did the Secretary of State fail to announce in his statement any support for the present shipbuilding industry? Is he aware that it would take four Nissans in the north-east of England to make up for the shortfall of jobs that he announced today? Why cannot our community have the protection that the Government seem so willing to afford Harland and Wolff in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is being unfair. I have said that there has been Government support of more than £1,400 million since 1979. The problem now is a lack of orders all over the world. In that difficult situation, I hope that the package that I have announced will create jobs, and be of help in the north-east and in Scotland.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that public expenditure in South Korea accounts for 20 per cent. of GDP and that in this country it is 45 per cent.? South Korea has a thriving shipbuilding industry while ours is in a shambles. Will my right hon. Friend make that point to those of his right hon. Friends who want to increase public expenditure?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I will certainly make that point to my right hon. and hon. Friends. My hon. Friend must also be aware that the Korean industry is by no means in as good a shape as it was.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Is the Minister aware that it is not true to say that there are no orders? The problem lies in the fact that for every 700,000 tonnes of world orders last year, the British industry received only 1,000 tonnes. There must be a message in that for the Minister who is responsible for the industry. The right hon. Gentleman has been less than truthful with the House and has told only half the truth. He has not mentioned the other half of the British shipbuilding industry, which is in private hands. He did not mention, for instance, that the 3,500 job losses that he has announced today will be further increased by 2,000 losses when Swan Hunter announces redundancies on the Tyne as a direct result of the Government's failure to give a shipbuilding order.

The former hon. Member for Tynemouth, the late Dame Irene Ward, must be turning in her grave after hearing the contribution of her successor today. Like her successor, the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), we can also afford to ignore the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) because he will be a goner at the next election.

Mr. Channon: I think that the House will know that special steps have been taken in an attempt to help Swan Hunter in relation to the auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel. I am acutely aware of the problem faced by Swan Hunter. Of course, there are some orders available, and the hon. Gentleman was correct about that. However, there are many fewer orders than there were, and I believe that every shipbuilding industry in the world is cutting back.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that I know that he and the House regret the necessity of having to make this statement? Does he have any idea how much money would be needed, in addition to the £1·5 billion already given, to secure the shrinking world orders that are available? Is he also aware that National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd., which was so denigrated by the Opposition, has created thousands of jobs and would he agree that British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd. will do the same?

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The coal and steel enterprise companies have created thousands of jobs and I very much hope that British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd. will receive a welcome from both sides of the House and will be successful. I suspect, as I have told the House, that it is not a question of money, Government support or more subsidy. Such assistance would make little difference to British shipbuilders. There are very few orders available and those that are will not be given away. The House is misleading itself if it imagines that there is a simple solution.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Is the Minister aware that workers at Austin and Pickersgill, the Sunderland shipbuilders, will take it as a sign of the Minister's indifference to their position that he could not be bothered to mention in his statement the 925 redundancies that were announced in Newcastle this morning? Is it not true that, unless the Minister changes his careless and complacent attitude, he will be back before the summer recess to announce that another one third of the industry has gone under? Is it not also true that the whole industry will disappear by the end of this year or early next year? Does the Minister accept that it is not true that there are no orders? Hon. Members have referred to orders from China and Cuba, and Yugoslavia is tendering for 23 ships abroad. Is Britain incapable of getting even five or six of these ships? It would appear that we are incapable under this Government. Will the Minister not tear up the appalling and shameful statement and get off his backside and do what Opposition Members have for long enough requested him to do?

Mr. Channon: I have already explained the position in relation to the China and Cuba orders. We are doing our utmost to win them, and the Government are helping to the maximum extent—[HON. MEMBERS: "What is the right hon. Gentleman doing?"] We are helping through the aid and trade provisions in terms of the China order, and talks are continuing about the Cuban orders.

On the hon. Gentleman's specific point about Sunderland, the figure that the hon. Gentleman referred to was included in the total number of redundancies that I announced in my statement.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Is my right hon. Friend aware that only a year or two ago—in the lifetime of this and the previous Administration—manufacturing industry was going out at a rate of knots? There is now an upturn in the demand for manufacturing goods and we do not have the capacity to provide for the market. Will my right hon. Friend therefore accept that I am more optimistic than he that in a year or two from now there might be a demand for shipping if world trade improves? Will he ensure that he keeps some of the units available and does not close them altogether so that they can be used again when there is an increase in shipping demand?

Mr. Channon: In general, my hon. Friend is right about the opportunities and prospects for British industry in the coming year. Some industries are still facing serious problems, and the shipbuilding industry is perhaps suffering most. I wish I could be as optimistic as my hon. Friend about the prospects for the shipbuilding industry worldwide, but I will certainly consider his remarks.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): Does the Minister agree with the former chairman of British Shipbuilders that the position now is so serious that the Prime Minister should intervene? Will she do that?

Mr. Channon: I heard what the former chairman said, but I agreed with very little of it.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Did my right hon. Friend see a report that was published last month which revealed that there is surplus capacity worldwide of 60 million tonnes in the bulk carrier market and 100 million tonnes in the tanker market? Against such a background is it any wonder that there is no demand for new ships?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend is quite right and the House must consider the points that he made. There is a worldwide problem and it would be foolish to imagine that any Government can take steps in isolation to cure the problem. If the Opposition were responsible, they would not take the line that they are adopting now.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does the Secretary of State really believe that the Government's dogmatic obsession with reorganisation and privatisation has been helpful to the shipbuilding industry? At such a

critical time the Government should have been concentrating their efforts on marketing and chasing orders. Rather than coming to the House to announce a rather puny welfare package, does the Secretary of State not accept that the communities in the north-east and in Scotland are looking for a package for industrial regeneration?

Mr. Channon: I do not agree that the privatisation of the warship yards has had an effect on the position. The orders required by both sets of yards are quite different. That is not to say that there are not serious problems in warship yards as well.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): When my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) raised the question of scrap and build, the Minister said that he had some sympathy with that. If so, will he consider orders for the four much-needed ocean survey ships which will be successors to the clapped out Heckla and Hecate? Will he consider successors to the Uganda? The Uganda was used during the Falklands war, and there is now no educational cruise ship available. Would it not be sensible to consider a viable scheme involving educational cruise ships? Such a scheme worked properly until the Uganda was taken over to be used as a hospital ship. If the need ever rose again, where would we find a hospital ship for an operation similar to the Falklands campaign?

Mr. Channon: I have some sympathy with the remarks of the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), although he was not referring specifically to scrap and build. Ship scrapping was tried in the 1930s and I, like most people, believe that that scheme was not a success. It is unlikely that it would be a success in the present climate.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): The Minister has referred to a worldwide shortage of orders. What steps, if any, have he or the Government taken to influence orders and so stop them from going abroad? Is he aware, for example, that P and O placed a mammoth order with Norway quite recently, which should have gone to British Shipbuilders? If he is destroying the British shipbuilding industry today—and that will be greeted with horror and disgust in the north-east—what will happen if there is a worldwide revival of the industry and the work-force has been broken up and the yards have been closed?

Mr. Channon: On the specific point which the hon. Gentleman raised about getting British shipowners to buy in British yards, our recent record is similar to that of most other European countries. I have examined the figures and they are more or less the same for all the countries concerned. It is in the interests of British shipowners to place orders in British yards if the terms are right. In the case of P and O, a ship is being built at the present time.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): In relation to the Secretary of State's last statement, will he accept that all the statements that Labour Members have show that we have the worst record in the EEC on placing orders for ships in domestic yards? Will he also note that in the House today anger turns to sadness and sadness turns to shame at his exposition of our shipbuilding industry and what the Government propose to do about it? He has not referred to the 1,350 jobs at Smith's Dock. He has not said that the £1,400 million was essentially to cover deficits and was not new investment, and that it went to the naval industry as well as the merchant yards. He has not said a word in praise of the shipyard workers in Smith's Dock who have rendered a signal service to our local economy and have delivered on time ships of the highest quality. He has mentioned Cuba and China, but he has not said whether, if those orders transpire, the yards that he has mentioned today for closure will stay open. Will he now give the House the commitment that, if those orders transpire between now and the end of the year those yards, including Smith's Dock, will stay open?

Mr. Channon: If an adequate number of orders can be found to keep those yards open, that will be highly desirable and something that I would welcome. But it would be wrong of me and misleading to those concerned if I were to stand at this Dispatch Box this afternoon and say I thought that that was at all likely. That would be raising false hopes, and I would be misleading people. That would not be doing them a service. Only about a third of the orders by British shipowners have been placed outside the United Kingdom, and that is about the average for the rest of Europe.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the Secretary of State aware that his response to the constructive proposals put by my right hon. and hon. Friends displays a lack of willingness to try to rescue the difficult situation in British Shipbuilders? Why, when Ministers come to the Dispatch Box and willingly put thousands of people on the scrapheap of unemployment, do they always look for the worst example in the world, in this case Sweden, and seek to emulate that worst example? Have the Conservative Government now lost any willingness to try to do just a little bit better than the worst for the people of Britain? Does the Minister realise that the Government established BSC (Industry) Ltd because they decimated the British steel industry, that they established NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. because they decimated the coal industry, and that they will now establish British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd. because they are decimating British shipbuilding?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is being unfair. I have already told the House of the Government's support of £1,400 million since 1979. It is unreasonable for the hon. Gentleman not to accept that and to say that the Government have not supported the industry. He says that I have quoted only the Swedish industry. I give him the example of the Dutch, the Japanese, the Koreans, the Germans and the French whose industries are also cutting back, some in a major way.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): What has been achieved since 1979 by spending £1,400 million of taxpayers' money other than to delay the evil and sad day that we are now experiencing?

Mr. Channon: It was right to spend that money and to support British Shipbuilders in the way that I have described. The situation that I have described today is unavoidable and is happening in many other countries.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Has not the Minister got a cheek to talk about shipbuilding being viable when in the past few years the Government have had double standards about viability in parts of the British economy? Why, if everything is tested by viability, was Johnson Matthey bank provided with £100 million of taxpayers' money in 1984 even though it was bankrupt and had run

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

out of reserves? Why cannot shipbuilders' families be treated in the same way as people in the casino economy? What about the viability of the Common Market, which received £250 million of British taxpayers' money because it went bankrupt last year? What about the Export Credits Guarantee Department. Last year, £250 million went down the Swanee and the Government bailed it out? That was not viable. Is the House of Lords viable? Is this place viable? [HON MEMBERS: "Are you viable?"] It seems to me that the Government are concerned only with their own people. They would rather throw people on the scrap heap —the dole queue—than keep them in jobs. It is like the fellow in Bolsover told me the other day—this Minister is educated beyond his intelligence. Come on, answer.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Secretary of State realise that through all the wearisome recital of platitudes and ministerial hand-wringing to which we have been subjected this afternoon, he did not announce one new initiative to help the British shipbuilding industry to survive? Does he realise that the cost to the taxpayer of the unemployment that has been announced, with a spin-off in other industries, will probably amount to £80 million a year? Should not that be taken into account in assessing the public expenditure consequences? Those people in the industry who have not been subject to redundancy announcements today desperately need reassurance. Can he tell us that he will not be back at that Dispatch Box before the end of 1986 announcing more redundancies if he is so confident that merchant shipbuilding is not at stake?

Mr. Channon: The future of merchant shipbuilding in this and every other country will be determined by the orders that are won and the work that can be found. British shipbuilders and the Government will try to ensure that they are. No one can be sure that that will happen, but that is our aim. Indeed, as the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said when he had responsibility for this industry,

> "Shipbuilding industries all over the world from Japan to Sweden are accepting the inevitability of contraction, and Britain cannot be insulated from this world trend."—[*Official Report*, 24 February 1977; Vol. 926, c. 1653]

That is the truth of the matter and it is hypocritical to pretend otherwise.

Hon. Members: Resign.

Mr. Speaker: Mrs. Lynda Chalker.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is to do with these exchanges, Sir. Will you promise to reprimand me on future occasions, as you have recently reprimanded that dreadful and persistent drip, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), because if you were to do that, that would ensure that my frequently more witty observations would be engraved on those tablets of stone, the *Official Report?*

Mr. Speaker: The words which go into *Hansard* are those spoken when a Member is called to speak by the Chair, not those made from a sedentary position.

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall do what the hon. Gentleman originally asked.

Mr. Faulds: But further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It was you who changed the ruling. In the very old days when I first came into the House witty interventions from a sedentary position were recorded in the *Official Report*, and it frequently lightened the exchanges.

Mr. Speaker: Maybe, if they were witty.

Foreign Affairs Council

4.17 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council, which took place in Brussels on 12 and 13 May 1986. I represented the United Kingdom.

As a precautionary measure following the Chernobyl disaster, the Council agreed a Commission proposal for a regulation to ban the import of certain foodstuffs from the USSR, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The ban entered into force on 13 May and will last until 31 May. It will be reviewed on 20 May, taking account of the latest scientific evidence. In addition, member states have undertaken to set contamination standards for intra-Community imports which are no higher than those for domestic produce, to limit the contamination level in exports to other member states to that acceptable to the recipient state, and to lift national controls on imports.

The Council discussed Community strategy in preparation for the launch of a new GATT round of trade negotiations.

The Council discussed improvements to the Community's mandate for negotiations with Mediterranean third countries on the adaptation of their co-operation and association agreements following the accession of Spain and Portugal. There will be further discussion at the June Council.

The Council reviewed the steps being taken to normalise the Community's relations with Turkey in preparation for a meeting of the Association Council which is expected to take place in the early autumn.

The text of a joint declaration by the Council, member states, Commission and Parliament against racism and xenophobia was agreed.

The Council also had a further general discussion of the current budgetary situation in the Community during which the Commission outlined its plans for a 1986 supplementary budget and the 1987 preliminary draft budget.

An Association Council with Malta was held in the margins of the Council. The operation of the EC-Malta association agreement and the possible implications for Malta of the enlargement of the Community were discussed.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): The most important part of the Minister's statement related to the constraints placed on trade from eastern European countries. She did not enlighten the House much on that important subject. It seems that this whole shambolic pantomime has had far more to do with safeguarding the agriculture of certain European Community countries than with protecting our citizens from food contaminated by radioactivitiy.

The way in which the provisional ban—it is no more than a provisional ban—has been arrived at gives us and the British people no great confidence in the capacity of the Community to take action to deal with such emergencies. In any event, will not the existing shambles be made even worse by today's meeting of experts if it produces suggested safe radiation levels which some countries are almost bound not to accept?

The European Council has assuredly failed to reassure worried people who have watched naked commercial interests put before agreed safe standards. In addition, we have undermined our relations with eastern European countries whose produce, alone of that of all the nations over which the Chernobyl cloud has moved, is to be affected. Can we be reassured that any future action on imported foodstuff will be directly related to the risk of contamination and less related to public relations exercises in reassurance and national commercial protection?

Will the Minister tell us what advice the World Health Organisation gave on a wholesale, seven-nation ban? Finally, will she accept that the initial, unforgiveable secrecy of the Soviet authorities must not be used as an excuse for Communist-bashing by any members of the European Community, as the most vivid lesson of the disaster is that we need closer relations within Europe as a whole and not a dogfight?

Mrs. Chalker: The measures that the United Kingdom has taken since 2 May affected all incoming produce from the Soviet Union and Poland. Our measures were already in existence and, as one item in a series of items at the Foreign Affairs Council, we agreed that there should be standards that should be regularly reviewed. The hon. Gentleman says that confidence is undermined because this process has taken time, but it is bound to take time. However, the United Kingdom Government have made it absolutely clear, right from the beginning, that our citizens were protected in relation to produce coming into this country. It must be right regularly to review a situation when that situation is developing. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not pour scorn on that in future, as he has today.

Of course we abhor the secrecy over this matter, which has made it more difficult for countries to take the decisions that they wish to take. Every country in the 12 has taken its own measures and we have come together in the decisions that I have referred to and which have been mentioned in the papers for some days. I believe that not only the British people but others in the European Community can have confidence in all the checks that are going on in all member countries, and of which the institutions concerned with these matters are fully aware.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): While I fully accept the good sense of the British Government's stand, is not there an underlying anxiety, which was expressed by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and which some of us share? Having attended the gathering, does my hon. Friend detect any new resolution among European Governments to move more in step? For example, why is aid given unconditionally by European Governments to some countries that continue to violate basic human rights? Is there yet any realisation of the poor impression that European Governments other than our own gave to the world by not facing up to Libyan terrorism and thus forcing the Americans to take action on their own part?

Mrs. Chalker: I assure my right hon. Friend that there is a definite resolution among all member countries of the 12 not only to allay anxieties, but, more than that, to make sure that there are measures in force in each country to test produce to make sure that it does not reach the markets of those countries.

[Mrs. Chalker]

There was no lengthy debate on human rights. There was an agreement on racism which follows exactly the policy in force in this country.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): What does it mean?

Mrs. Chalker: It follows our own policy in exactly the way that I think my hon. Friends would, in the past, have probably accepted. It is not a legally binding declaration, but it reflects existing policy, which condemns all forms of discrimination on racial grounds.

I should add to my right hon. Friend the member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) that we did not have a full discussion about Libya. There were discussions in the margins, but they were not on the agenda.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Was there any discussion about the impact of the Chernobyl disaster on European Community stocks of food? As the Ukraine produces 20 per cent. of USSR agricultural production, is the Community ready to assist the Russians?

The Minister's statement refers to a supplementary budget. Will that match the estimates of Agra Europe, that it might reach 1·5 billion ecu in the current year?

Mrs. Chalker: If the USSR seeks to buy cereals on the world market from stocks, that will be dealt with in the normal way. The proposed supplementary budget is within the 1·4 per cent ceiling. It will include the further 500 million ecu for the British 1985 abatement and it will certainly not go as high as the hon. Gentleman suggested. It will be kept within the strict budgetary guidelines to which we have always sought to adhere.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): Is it not surprising to hear the risk of contamination being taken so lightly in the House? Is it not entirely because of the lack of information from the Soviet Union and eastern Europe that we have been compelled to take steps that may or may not be necessary, but which have to be taken as a precaution?

Mrs. Chalker: Indeed. My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Contamination, whether of food or of the ground, is a most serious matter. The 12 members of the European Community and the countries in eastern Europe now seem conscious of the need to share information at the earliest possible opportunity. That has been one of the outcomes of the discussions that we have had. The International Atomic Energy Agency will be co-ordinating the gathering of information from whatever source. I welcome the Soviet agreement to provide the IAEA with reports on radiation levels. That will enable us to have fuller discussions at earlier dates. The IAEA board of governors will be meeting next week to discuss the matter.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does the hon. Lady believe that the single sentence in her statement about the budgetary problems faced by the Community is sufficient information for the House? Is the Community facing bankruptcy, as many people believe? Is there a crisis on the way? If so, should not the House know now rather than later?

Mrs. Chalker: As the budget has not yet been presented to the Council of Ministers, there was no substantive discussion of it. That is why I have no substantive discussion to report on. It is quite clear that we have already done well to secure the price cuts that were agreed in April by the Agriculture Council. They would not have been secured without budgetary discipline. We shall continue with that discipline to ensure that we reach the kind of solution for a reduction of surpluses that this country and the rest of the Community seek.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne) *rose*——

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): No supplementary budget?

Mr. Gow: What contribution was made by Her Majesty's Government to the discussion about a declaration against racism and xenophobia? Will my hon. Friend enlighten the House about the advantages that will accrue to mankind as a result of the discussions that took place?

Mrs. Chalker: Once more I have to say to my hon. Friend that the discussion followed the discussion by us of our existing policy and, indeed, the discussion in many other countries. I have already said that it was a combination of all our views to condemn all forms of discrimination on racial grounds. It is a moral and political undertaking. It is not legally binding.

Mr. Budgen: An undertaking—ah!

Mrs. Chalker: But it has been made available to the House. Three months ago my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, placed an explanatory memorandum in the Library of the House. That will provide my hon. Friend with all the details. There was no substantive discussion.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): On the situation in Turkey, are Her Majesty's Government and the Council of Ministers satisfied about the progress towards human rights and democracy in that country and about the trials there of trade union leaders and peace activists?

Mrs. Chalker: These matters were very much to the fore in the discussions that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had with the Prime Minister of Turkey. The same line has been taken in the discussions within the European Community. Some Opposition Members seem to enjoy refusing to acknowledge that progress is being made. That does nothing to promote human rights. If the progress that is being made were to be welcomed, we would encourage countries that do not observe the human rights standards that we wish to see to do even more. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will do that.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Is it not unfortunate that an announcement about another massive Common Market overspend has been made on the same day as the announcement of the closure of a third of our shipbuilding industry, because there is not money with which to build ships? On the containment of radioactive food from east Europe, has my hon. Friend the Minister found the answer to a question that has been asked several times since last Thursday: how do we distinguish a Polish pig from an East German pig if both of them are shipped through Leipzig, which is not covered by the new restrictions?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend might have had a chance during the earlier statement to ask his question about shipbuilding. But it is not simply a question of overcapacity in shipbuilding throughout the world.

Mr. Taylor: Just like farming.

Mrs. Chalker: I say to my hon. Friend that the money which in his view should be spent on ships should certainly not be spent on further surpluses.

Mr. Taylor: It is being spent on surpluses.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend knows full well that every measure that we can take is being taken to reduce surpluses. On his question about East German pigs or Polish pigs, he knows that imports of such material are covered by the agreement.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Why was East Germany left out of the ban? That struck most British people as being very odd indeed. Can the Minister answer a question that I was asked at my surgery last Saturday? Why have the British Government banned the import of foodstuffs from Eastern bloc countries, although they have informed British citizens that they are free to travel on holiday and business to those areas, where they will surely be eating those very same foodstuffs?

Mrs. Chalker: East Germany is beyond the 1,000-km limit that was drawn, but the West German Government have undertaken that any of the produce coming from East Germany will be fully tested under their system of monitoring.

Mr. Budgen: May I thank my hon. Friend for her important and detailed statement about racism? Will she please reassure the friends of the EEC that her statement was not mere vacuous posturing and that the British Government will be pressing all the nation states of the EEC to introduce immediately into their national Parliaments legislation that is analogous to the much-respected race relations legislation in this country?

Mrs. Chalker: I suggest to my hon. Friend that if he looked at the legislation that is on the statute books of other countries, he would find that the member states of the European Community could not have agreed to this declaration unless that policy was already on their statute books.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Bearing in mind the relations that the Foreign Affairs Council has with other European countries, were the Foreign Ministers aware of the continuing concern that such a deeply stained individual as Kurt Waldheim might be elected President of Austria? Although this is a matter for the people of Austria, there are, nevertheless, few people who now believe that he told the truth about his wartime role. Clearly he knew full well what was going on and that the German army and the Nazis were involved in killings and deportations.

Mrs. Chalker: Although I know that it has become commonplace to try to attribute every ill in the world to the European Community, I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that the Foreign Affairs Council did not discuss the matter that he has raised.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Would my hon. Friend be kind enough to tell the House how the EEC defines xenophobia? For the benefit of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) is she able to tell the House what penalties the EEC and this Parliament will impose if anybody transgresses and becomes xenophobic under the definition established by Brussels?

Mrs. Chalker: I have already said that this is not a legally binding declaration.

Mr. Budgen: What is the point of having it, then?

Mrs. Chalker: It reflects existing policy in this country I should have thought that my hon. Friend would have had the——

Mr. Evans: Decency?

Mrs. Chalker: Maybe that is the word. I should have thought that my hon. Friend would have had the "whatever" to realise that discrimination on racial grounds will not lead to progress for anybody in this country or anywhere else in the world.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I put a very precise, factual, informed question to the Minister? Although she may be unable to answer it at once, I am sure that she will be able to get information from the Box and answer it later. At what time, on what day, some two or three days before the announcement and news came from Sweden, did a telephone call come through from Russia to a British member of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna asking for advice about how to deal with graphite fires? Precisely what was the Russian request and in what terms was it phrased? I do not say that it mentioned Chernobyl, Minsk or Kiev, but what, precisely, was the question? What were they asking for? Did the British official of the International Atomic Energy Agency take any steps to let the members of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority know? And did members of the Atomic Energy Authority——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Did all this go on at the Foreign Affairs Council?

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister raised the question of what happened, and I am asking a very precise question. Was the IAEA informed? Did the IAEA inform the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and were Ministers informed? The Minister knows perfectly well that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman has done jolly well. It would make an excellent Adjournment debate.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall read the *Official Report* with great care. I shall look into the matters that the hon. Gentleman has raised and try to unravel what is going on.

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): Will my hon. Friend confirm whether there were any discussions at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council regarding the International Atomic Energy Agency and, if so, what was the outcome of those discussions?

Mrs. Chalker: Indeed, the International Atomic Energy Agency was discussed briefly because we were able to welcome the Soviet agreement to provide reports on radiation levels to the IAEA. We also welcomed the concerted effort by the IAEA not only to gather the information but to identify further needs for data and to disseminate that information to all interested parties—a crucial establishment of the facts against which further measures should be judged.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Will the hon. Lady propose to the British ambassador in Russia and to her colleagues in Europe that their ambassadors in Moscow should attend the funerals of those who have died

[Mr. Andrew Faulds]

at Chernobyl and of those who will die from the effects of the Chernobyl disaster because, but for the grace of God, there go all of us?

Mrs. Chalker: I think that the hon. Gentleman exaggerates a little. We have total sympathy with the relatives of all those affected by the disaster, but I fear that the location of those funerals will not be made known to foreign embassies, so the suggestion may not be possible to implement. Certainly, the suggestion will be considered.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Did the Foreign Affairs Council discuss the ludicrous idea that members of the European Assembly should be granted immunity from arrest and prosecution? Is that perhaps because they are xenophobic? Secondly, I am chairman of the British-Malta parliamentary group, so can my hon. Friend inform the House what is happening about Malta in view of the enlargement of the EEC?

Mrs. Chalker: On my hon. Friend's first question, I do not think that we can take that issue much further this afternoon. On his second question, we are talking about the Association Council in the margins. We had a discussion informally, and then a little more formally, about security in the Mediterranean, but there was no question of coming to any decisions. Discussions with Malta will continue about its associaton with the European Community. Nothing substantive was decided.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): What about the important question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) concerning what is to happen to those people who journey beyond the Iron Curtain, such as the important IPU delegation? Fourteen members of the House, led by the Deputy Prime Minister, no less, will no doubt be eating and drinking their fill of the food that is not allowed into this country. Is there not something rather illogical about that?

Mrs. Chalker: When an IPU delegation is on its way, I am sure that it carefully considers where it is going, what it is going to do, and what it will eat and drink. I am certain that, as the delegation is going to Moscow, the Soviet authorities will take good care of the hon. Gentleman and ensure that nothing goes near his lips that will be injurious to him.

Mr. George Robertson: I asked the Minister a question earlier which she did not answer. What was the advice given by the World Health Organisation about the need for a wholesale ban on the produce of seven nations?

Mrs. Chalker: A wholesale ban on the produce of seven nations was not the advice given and it was certainly not the advice accepted by the national experts, who are also meeting in Brussels on Monday. I shall look again at what the hon. Gentleman says so that it comes up at the review meeting if that is necessary.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When officials know perfectly well the answer to a question asked by an hon. Member, should there not be some mechanism by which the Minister can answer, even if she does not know the answer immediately? Should not the Minister be able at least to make a statement at the end of Question Time? All that I ask for——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a heavy day ahead of us and the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked a question which was rather long. I have no doubt that he will receive the answers for which he asks. There are many other ways of asking such questions.

Shipbuilding Industry

4.43 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the crisis in the merchant shipbuilding industry."

I shall be brief, but I hope that my brevity will not lead the House to think that there is any lack of seriousness in my application.

The matter is specific because this afternoon we heard the proposal to close three shipyards and to make 3,500 workers in the shipbuilding industry redundant. The matter could hardly be more specific for those most directly affected.

The matter is important because, as was made clear in our exchanges when questioning the Secretary of State, the whole future of the British merchant shipbuilding industry may be at stake. It is difficult, if not impossible, to underestimate the significance of this afternoon's statement and the matters to which it relates.

The issue requires urgent consideration because time is short and 1986 may be the year in which it is decided whether the British merchant shipbuilding industry survives or disappears. An important part of the industry has already disappeared as a result of the statement this afternoon. I submit that the subject falls within the purview of Standing Order No. 10.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the crisis in the merchant shipbuilding industry."

I listened with great care to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, as I listened with care to what was said in the House earlier this afternoon. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, my sole duty when considering an application under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for this evening or for tomorrow. I regret that I cannot rule that the matter meets all the criteria laid down in the Standing Order and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The House respects your judgment in the conventional form and is aware of all the matters that you must take into account when coming to that judgment. It would be inappropriate to make any comment on that, but Ministers are present and they understand that this is an emergency, although we understand why you do not regard it as such. I hope that the remarks by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) will be taken into account, so that in the very near future we may have a debate.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman and the whole House understands that I am bound by the Standing Order. I hope that there are other ways in which this important matter may be raised on the Floor of the House.

Hinkley Point Power Station (Accident)

4.47 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the refusal of the Central Electricity Generating Board to publish the full report of the board of inquiry into the Hinkley Point accident of 29 November."

That accident involved a release of radioactivity at Hinkley Point in Somerset and resulted in the issue of anti-radiation tablets to the work force for only the second time in Britain. The CEGB promised a board of inquiry into the accident, which would be made public.

On 13 December I was promised in a parliamentary reply that a full report of the inquiry would be issued "soon". Since then the CEGB has given me five promises about the imminent publication of the report, including a number of specific dates. Each has failed to materialise.

At 2 o'clock this afternoon, the CEGB made public a four-page document saying that there was very little to worry about. But it has specifically refused a request from me to make public the full report.

The CEGB has said that the accident was not very serious. I have no wish to disbelieve that, but the public have a right to see the evidence. There can be no acceptable reason, in the light of public concern at the time, highlighted by the Chernobyl tragedy, why the full report on this important accident should not be published. The CEGB cannot expect to receive public support for nuclear power while it keeps secret such vital information.

The CEGB's refusal runs counter to the undertakings to me. It also makes a mockery of the assurances by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Energy yesterday that in future nuclear matters would be conducted in the open.

This is an important and specific matter because we can have no faith in the assurances of the Secretaries of State about openness in nuclear matters if they allow the CEGB to keep this document secret.

In view of the widespread concern about nuclear power, it is now important that the House receives assurances that the Secretaries of State for Energy and the Environment will live up to their undertakings about full openness on this and all other nuclear matters.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the refusal of the CEGB to publish the full report of the board of inquiry into the Hinkley Point accident on 29 November."

I regret that I have to give the hon. Gentleman the same answer that I gave to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). I listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

BILL PRESENTED

DOG FIGHTING PENALTIES (NO. 3)

Mr. Harry Greenway presented a Bill to amend the Protection of Animals Act 1911 to increase the penalties for offences against animals under Section 1(1): And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 July, and to be printed. [Bill 62.]

Shops (Sunday Trading and Workers' Protection)

4.50 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to reform the law relating to Sunday trading and to provide protection for workers in the retail industry.

Most hon. Members are well aware of the anomalies in the 1950 Shops Act and certain other Acts that govern the laws applicable to regulation of shop opening hours both on a Sunday and for the remainder of the week. They are also aware of the difficulties and problems of enforcing those laws. As legislators, we have a responsibility to change the law so that its application is enforceable and practical, thereby ensuring the right and just protection of the people it covers—be they shopowners, shop workers or shoppers.

There are three major criticisms of the 1950 Act—first, its many and varied anomalies, secondly, its complications and thirdly, the difficulty of enforcement. Many argue that the Act was hopelessly out of date when it was enacted, and after 36 years of far-reaching changes in the structure and pattern of retailing it is necessary to alter something that is entirely out of touch with modern conditions. The Act is a complicated piece of legislation; it is not easy for a lawyer, let alone the average shopkeeper, to understand and interpret.

There is also the problem of shops selling a mixed range of goods, some falling within the exemptions in the act and others not doing so. Compliance by shopkeepers and understanding by shoppers are severely tested, and effective enforcement becomes virtually impossible.

Added to all that, the penalties for breaches of the Act have not kept pace with the times. Currently, the maximum penalty for infringing the Sunday trading restrictions is £1,000, and only £100 for breach of general closing hour requirements. The level of fines imposed by magistrates is little deterrent to large traders to break the law. Frustration with the inadequacies of the penalties deter local authorities from enforcing the law.

Clearly, the Act has produced such difficulties and so much criticism that there is a profound need for change. Many have shared that view and attempted to change the Act. There have been six attempts by private Members in the other place and 12 attempts in this House, and in 1961 the Home Office departmental committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Crathorne, conducted considerable research. Yet they all failed to introduce the necessary legislation. Of course, most recently the Government's own proposals for complete deregulation were rejected by the House. Some hon. Members have suggested that, after that marathon debate, we should forget about reform. However, I am sure that most hon. Members, appreciating all that I have stated about the Act, would like action to be taken.

My Bill would seek the establishment of a standing conference under the chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who should succeed to the position of Father of the House if he is re-elected, and who is recommended by the present Father of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan). That proves conclusively that I am suggesting things beyond the realms of personal political prejudice on this issue.

Representatives on the standing conference would include all organisations that declared interest in the recent debate — Members of Parliament, religious organisations, the Keep Sunday Special campaign, the National Chamber of Trade, the Retail Consortium, the Multiple Food Retailers Employers Association, local authority associations, the police, the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, other interested unions and representatives of consumers. In addition, all other organisations involved in retail distribution should be considered, including ACAS, so that the broadest spectrum can be covered.

The standing conference would be asked to consider in detail the 1950 Act and other Acts involved in the retail trade, and, by agreement, to recommend to the House either amendments to the existing Act or a new shops Act. It would be asked also to consider other factors before presenting its recommendations, such as the exercise of the right to worship, the employment, remuneration and working conditions of employees, costs and prices in retail distributive industries, the interests and wishes of consumers, the incidence of crime, the demands on transport, the effect on the environment and the interests of residents.

The Bill is necessary, for a number of good and cogent reasons. Equally important, it should enable adequate protection for some of the most low-paid workers in this country. The Bill would make a serious attempt not to tinker with one or two sections of the 1950 Act, but to make constructive proposals for wide, involved and comprehensive consultation with those directly or indirectly affected. It is also essential to show the nation that this House is prepared to continue with consent, discussion and negotiation and to make all attempts necessary to remedy and rectify any and every law that is widely treated with contempt.

It is for those and all the other reasons to which I have referred that I ask the House to give leave to bring in my Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Thomas Torney, Dr. Oonagh McDonald, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe, Mr. James Hamilton, Mr. Sean Hughes, Mr. David Winnick, Ms. Jo Richardson, Mr. Frank Cook and Mr. Terry Lewis.

SHOPS (SUNDAY TRADING AND WORKERS' PROTECTION)

Mr. Ray Powell accordingly presented a Bill to reform the law relating to Sunday trading and to provide protection for workers in the retail industry; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 July and to be printed. [Bill 63.]

Orders of the Day

Wages Bill

As amended, (in the Standing Committee), considered, Ordered.

That the order in which proceedings on consideration of the Wages Bill, as amended, are taken shall be new Clauses relating to Part I, Amendments to Clauses 1 to 11, Schedule 1, new Clauses relating to Part II, Amendments to Clause 12, Schedule 2, Clauses 13 and 14, Schedule 3, Clauses 15 to 25, new Clauses relating to Part III, Amendments to Clauses 26 to 28, remaining new Clauses, Amendments to Clauses 29 to 31, Schedules 4 to 6, Clause 32 and new Schedules.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

New Clause 9

DEDUCTIONS

'(1) No deduction

(a) shall be made from any workers wages and no payment shall be required from any worker for any disciplinary purpose of more than 10 per cent. of gross wages in any pay period;

(b) shall be made or payment required for disciplinary reasons unless the employer can show that the worker concerned was guilty of the act or omission complained of.

(2) Any worker who is dismissed for complaining to a tribunal about an illegal deduction or payment shall have a right to apply to the Tribunal for an immediate reinstatement or adequate compensation for loss of employment.

(3) When the Tribunal finds that a worker was subjected to an illegal deduction or request for payment, it shall award compensation to the worker taking account of the loss and inconvenience suffered by the worker and the failure of the employer to comply with the law.'.—*[Ms. Clare Short.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

5 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 3, in clause 1, page 1, line 15, at end insert—

'and;

(c) the worker concerned was guilty of the act or ommission complained of'.

No. 19, in clause 2, page 3, line 34, leave out 'in retail employment'.

No. 20, in line 34, leave out from 'makes' to 'any' in line 35.

No. 28, in clause 3, page 4, line 34, leave out 'in retail employment'.

No. 30, in page 5, line 2, leave out 'in retail employment'.

No. 43, in clause 5, page 7, line 9, at end insert—

'*(e)* that an employer has dismissed a worker because he made a complaint to an industrial tribunal under this section, or

(f) that the employer has not shown that the worker concerned was guilty of the act or omission complained of, or

(g) that the amount deducted or paid by one or more workers was greater than the value of the loss complained of'.

No. 44, in page 7, line 44, at end insert—

'*(c)* the tribunal shall make an award of compensation to the worker taking account of the loss and inconvenience suffered by the worker and the failure of the employer to comply with the law;

(d) in the case of a complaint under subsection (1)*(e)* the tribunal shall order reinstatement or adequate compensation for loss of employment'.

Ms. Short: Today we shall consider part I of the Bill. Having completed Second Reading, consultation and consideration in Committee, most people are aware that the Bill is seeking to cut the pay of 3 million of Britain's poorest workers in the wages council sector — for example, textiles, hotel and catering, shops and distribution. It is not widely understood, however, that the Government are making changes, which are set out in part I, to make it more likely that workers will be subjected to fines and deductions from pay for disciplinary reasons. The examples given to us in Committee by the Under-Secretary of State for Employment were lateness, absenteeism and failure to comply with health and safety standards, and the Bill refers to deductions or fines for cash shortages and stock deficiencies. The Bill makes it clear that an individual who can prove that he is not guilty of causing any shortage of cash or stock might still be subject to a deduction and have no right to have that reversed.

The laws that will be repealed by the Bill are set out in the Truck Acts, and the Paymaster General is fond of sneering at their old age and making that a dogmatic reason in itself for repealing them, irrespective of whether they have worked well. The part of the Truck Acts that applies to deductions and fines is not that ancient in that it was enacted in 1896. That measure is currently in force and it limits the extent to which deductions and fines are used to discipline workers. I am sure that its repeal will lead to a great increase in the use of deductions and fines.

The Act lays down a number of conditions, which means that employers must think carefully before making deductions. It provides that there must be a signed contract, with the worker signing and agreeing that he is willing to be subject to deductions. The employer has to provide written particulars of the sum that has been lost or of the omission that led to the fine or deduction. A register must be kept of all fines and the deduction must not exceed the value of the loss of which the employer is complaining. The amount deducted must be reasonable.

In the light of these restrictions, the making of deductions is not a widespread practice in British industry. These restrictions are to be lifted, however, and under the new law anyone will face a fine or deduction if he agrees to sign a contract which states or even implies that his employer might subject him to fines or deductions. There will be no requirement that a fine must be reasonable or must not exceed the loss to which the employer has been subjected. The employer will not have to specify what act or omission led to the loss that led in turn to the deduction.

The only protection that the Government are offering is that a limited number of workers—those in retailing —will not be able to lose more than 10 per cent. of their wages each week if a deduction is made as a consequence of a cash shortage or stock deficiency. The Government have made no case for that protection being restricted to retail workers when many other workers might be subjected to deductions.

The Government tell us that we need not worry and that all workers will be properly protected. They say that if a worker is subjected unfairly to a deduction, he will be able to take his case to a tribunal. However, if a worker goes before a tribunal and says that he was desperate for a job, signed a contract which said that he might face deductions

[Ms. Short]

in certain circumstances, had £5 or £10 deducted from miserly low wages, can prove to the tribunal that he was not responsible for the loss and states that a fellow employee is willing to confess, the tribunal will not be able to reverse the deduction.

The tribunals will be extremely weak. They will be able to impose a penalty on an employer only to the extent of ordering him to restore the amount of deduction or fine. Therefore, the Bill is a charter for employers to make a deduction when in doubt. If an employer is found to have broken the law in making a deduction, he will have to pay back only the £5 or £10 that was deducted. That sort of sum might be considerable for someone earning £50 a week, but it will not be very much for the average employer.

The new clause and the amendments seek to amend the Bill to prevent the widespread growth of deductions from workers' pay for disciplinary reasons. The Government seem to envisage the operation of the Bill as part of a great move to macho management. The new clause would impose a limit of 10 per cent. of gross wages on all deductions and fines for all workers. If the Government are not willing to accept this proposal, they must tell us why retailing is so special. Why will it be all right to deduct 20 per cent. of the wages of a cleaner or hotel chambermaid, for example, who might be working for similarly low wages of £40 to £50 a week, and not all right to take more than 10 per cent. from the wages of a retail worker? We accept the 10 per cent. limit—we would like a lower limit—but there is no reason why such protection should extend only to retail workers.

My argument is not theoretical. In the past, employers have taken enormous sums from low-paid workers. Petrol pump attendant work is notorious. The famous case of Barrett was taken under the Truck Acts. A young man who was unemployed agreed to accept a job at a low rate of pay because he was desperate for employment. His contract stated that he would be responsible for any till shortages. He thought that that was reasonable, but he did not know that many others would have access to his till. In time, he faced deductions of £20 a week from a wage of slightly more than £50 a week. If the Bill is enacted without the amendments that we are proposing, it is likely that many more workers will face deductions of that sort without being able to take action.

Secondly, the new clause provides that an employer who makes a deduction from a worker's wages will be required to show that the individual facing a deduction or fine was guilty of the act of which he complains. It is remarkable that under the Bill an individual who can prove that he had no responsibility for a shortage of cash or stock, or some other loss or damage, and can prove that someone else carried the responsibility, will still face fines and deductions if he has signed a contract that states that he might be subjected to fines or deductions. That is unacceptable, and we believe that all reasonable people will take that view. We are proposing that workers should be subjected to deductions and fines only when the employer can show that the worker was guilty of the act or omission of which he complains.

Thirdly, the new clause addresses itself to those who are subject to an illegal deduction and take their case to a tribunal in the way that the Government propose, only to find that they lose their job because the employer is annoyed at being dragged before a tribunal for breaking the law. At present, a worker who has been employed for less than two years has no right to initiate an action for unfair dismissal. A part-time worker—40 per cent. of retail workers are part-timers, and it is a sector where the Government expect many deductions to be made because they have made special provision for retailing—has to be employed for five years before he has the protection of being able to complain that he was dismissed unfairly.

Under the Bill, someone who faces an unfair deduction and loses money from a small wage packet that he cannot afford to lose is offended and hurt by the suggestion that he is guilty of dishonesty when he is not. He may go to all the trouble and loss of time from work that is involved in taking and proving a case before a tribunal. But if he takes that course, he can be sacked, and he will find that he can do nothing about that. This is outrageous. We are saying that anyone who is sacked for taking a case to a tribunal that finds his employer guilty of making an illegal deduction should have the right to bring an action for unfair dismissal and be restored to his job or to receive compensation for the loss of employment.

New clause 9 would empower tribunals to award compensation to a worker, taking into account the loss and inconvenience to that worker of taking the case to the tribunal. The Minister told us repeatedly in Committee that we must not worry about some low-paid workers being likely to lose large chunks of their money because, if anything wrong was done, they would be able to take their case to an industrial tribunal. Taking a case to an industrial tribunal takes an awful lot of courage, organisation, time, energy and money. It means loss of pay for the days that have to be taken off to prepare the case and to appear before the tribunal, and travelling time.

A worker in retailing might earn £50 or £60 a week and be subjected to a deduction of £5 or £6, but it will cost more than that to take the case to a tribunal to prove innocence, and the worker can be awarded only the £5 or £6 deduction. The Government are saying that people have the theoretical right to take their case to a tribunal. In practice, employees will be scared to take a case to a tribunal because they will be sacked if they do, or they will not be able to afford to pursue the case. No employer will be intimidated by the possibility of being taken to a tribunal, however, because the punishment that can be meted out is so small.

The Minister made much of the fact that small employers are worried about industrial tribunals. Surveys show that they do not like to be taken to tribunals and that they fear cases of unfair dismissal. We accept that, but the Government have to take account of tribunals' powers in such cases. They can force an employer to take back a sacked employee or to award compensation, which can be thousands of pounds, for loss of a job if the employer is unwilling to take the worker back.

Small employers find tribunals frightening because they fear losing and what might be done to them. Employers will laugh at the tribunals on deductions, however, if their only power is to force the employer to pay back £5 to some low-paid employee. The employer will not bother to go along. Rather he will send the office-keeper or even write a letter saying, "I do not care about the outcome." Being taken to a tribunal will not be onerous. It will prove no sanction in preventing employers from imposing illegal deductions on low-paid employees.

Everything about the new clause is reasonable. If it is not accepted, workers throughout the country should note

that, from now on, any employer who wants to impose fines or deductions on workers can have a field day. It will be simple to take large chunks from workers' pay. That is likely to happen extensively in the least well-organised sectors of the economy, where low pay and bad employment conditions are prevalent.

The Government have introduced a power, but seem unconcerned to include sufficient protections to ensure that the right to make a deduction or to impose a fine will not be exercised unless there is real evidence that a worker is guilty of an offence. Nor have they ensured that, if an employer behaves wrongly, a worker can have his or her rights protected.

Without the new clause, the Bill will be deeply objectionable. It will lead to a widespread growth in deductions, conflict and tension in industry and unjust reductions in the wages of some of the poorest paid workers in the country.

5.15 pm

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Popular): In Committee, we often complained—the complaint was made by some Conservative Members as well—that much of the Bill showed evidence of having been drafted by people who had never seen the inside of a factory, store room or retail establishment. Many factors about real commercial and industrial life have not been considered in the least.

We see things most clearly if we take hard practical examples. I shall take the example of a trade supplier. It may be a supplier of motor accessories or tools. It is therefore outside the retail industry—a wholesaler. The front part of the establishment has a trade counter, behind which is a store. The chap who owns it employs a young fellow as a storesman, who goes to the back to fetch stuff out.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): The hon. Gentleman used the words "trade counter". I did not hear him mention them in Committee, but they are relevant in this context. According to the explanatory notes, we are concerned with places where members of the general public are served. Would he like to guess whether a person who goes to a trade counter is a member of the general public or some other special type of person who is not covered by the Bill?

Mr. Mikardo: I am talking about an establishment that sells to the trade, such as a builder's merchant who sells to builders, not members of the general public, or a chap who sells tools to engineers, or a chap who sells motor accessories to repair garages. His having a trade counter takes us entirely out of the ambit of retailing.

The storesman picks up the requisition and puts two of these, one of those and two of those in a tray and brings them out to the trade counter to sell them. There is nothing to prevent the owner from telling his storesman at the end of the week, "There is a stock deficiency of £40." He does not have to prove it. He can tell his storesman, "I shall make a deduction from your pay," and because the business is not retail, the deduction is not limited to 10 per cent. of the storesman's wage.

The owner does not have to say that the deficiency is in five-inch spanners, and that nine have gone. He does not have to say, "I know that you are responsible because I saw you going out with some spanners in your jacket pocket." He does not have to adduce one tittle of evidence to demonstrate that the storesman is responsible for the stock shortage. Indeed, he does not have to produce one tittle of evidence to demonstrate that there is a stock shortage at all. He can invent a stock shortage. He can even create a stock shortage himself by nicking half a dozen electric bulbs and taking them home. He could then tell his assistant, Joe Bloggs, "Half a dozen bulbs are missing and you have to pay for them."

I hope that the Minister will not say in reply, "Not many employers would behave in that way." Of course not many would, but the law tries to deal as well as it can with all contingencies, not merely with majorities or minorities. Only a small percentage of the population engages in house-breaking, but that does not stop us having laws to deal with those who do.

The employer can tell an employee, "There is a stock shortage," but he does not have to prove that there is one or that the employee is responsible for it. Someone else may have been responsible. He may have been responsible himself. On that basis, he can make a deduction.

The lad knows that he was not responsible for the shortage because he knows that the old man nicked the bulbs and took them away. He is angry about that, so he decides to go to an industrial tribunal. That is not easy. As the Minister said—my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) agreed—there are difficulties for employers, but the difficulties for employees are much greater. Those who work in sizeable establishments which are unionised have the help of their unions, but the wages council industries are almost entirely composed of trades where the average establishment is small and the turnover of labour is rapid by comparison with other trades.

That is true of the hotel and catering industry. It is true to a lesser extent in some parts of the garment and needle trades and to an even lesser extent of retailing. In all those trades, unionisation is rare because of the difficulty of organising in establishments where only a handful of people are employed, and where that handful of people is liable to change rapidly.

Therefore, the trade supplier for whom the lad works is unlikely to be unionised.

Ms. Clare Short: My hon. Friend is right to say that the workers who are most likely to be subject to deductions are low-paid workers in the wages council industries, but the provisions mean that, in future, all workers will be liable to such deductions.

Mr. Mikardo: I appreciate that it could happen to any worker. The Bill gives the employer greater power than rests with the judiciary, because it gives him the power to fine without proof of guilt. No magistrates court, county court, assizes, appeal court or High Court could fine me without having established that I was guilty of something. But under the Bill, any worker anywhere—those who will get it in the neck will be the low-paid workers in the wages council, non-unionised industries—can be fined by his employer in a way that the Lord Chief Justice could not fine me. He can be fined by his employer without a jot or tittle of evidence that there has been any culpability.

For the life of me, I do not understand how anyone can begin to justify that position. There is no hon. Member who, if it happened to him, would not believe himself to be the victim of a gross injustice and who would not scream to high heaven about it. How can we justify inflicting upon others a condition which we would never accept for a moment as applying to ourselves?

[Mr. Mikardo]

Let me return to my trade supplier. The lad is aggrieved and, notwithstanding the fact that he knows little about tribunals and that he does not have a trade union to represent him and that he does not know where the tribunal is or how to get the forms, he asks round—perhaps at the citizens advice bureau or perhaps his friends—and he appeals to a tribunal. His employer says, "You had better drop that, Harry, because if you continue with it, you will get your few quid from me, but you will get the sack as well." There is not one word in the Bill to prevent that.

Even worse, the employer need not even forewarn the lad. The lad goes to the tribunal and gets an award giving him back his own money. That is the only award that he will get. There will be no compensation for the time during which he lost the money or damages for the aggravation that he has been caused or the injustice of being falsely accused of theft. There is not a halfpenny of compensation for that. All that he will get from the great victory is his own money back. Then his employer says, "I am fed up with you. You were out last Thursday at the tribunal. I do not want you; I want people who will be here every day." There is nothing in the Bill to prevent that.

I shall listen with great care to the Minister, who, in his personal relationships, is a fundamentally decent chap, trying to justify, within the parameters of his personal morality, this hideous, raving injustice.

Mr. Holt: We had many a happy hour in Committee debating this element of the Bill. Like the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), I am sure that many thousands of people will discover, to their surprise, the legislation that the Government have introduced. I found elements of surprise even at the highest levels of the Institute of Personnel Management. Indeed, I found a Minister who was amazed when I told him what the Government proposed to do, and who encouraged me to continue my vendetta against the Government on this part of the Bill.

The Government have been extremely clever in many ways; one must give them credit for that. Many Conservative Members, not necessarily supported by Opposition Members, are in favour of the proposals in the wages council element of the total package. But this curate's egg brings with it not only the simple abolition of the wages councils or their restructuring and reformation, but more work for the lawyers in the industrial tribunal courts. I put down a marker that I shall return to industrial tribunals several times.

I endorse the view of the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) that the Government's proposals will create a minefield of trouble for them. I have the simplistic view, as one who has worked in industry for most of his life, that the best industrial relations are those engendered between employers and employees without interference from Government. The Government should be only a last resort when all else appears to have failed.

The Truck Acts have been on the statute book for a long time, but that does not necessarily make them bad. Marriage laws have been on the statute book for a long time, but we are not proposing to abolish marriage and to introduce some new consolidation Bill.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Give them time.

5.30 pm

Mr. Holt: The Government have no right to bring before the House change for the sake of change, without justification. The Government have made no case for changing and abolishing the Trucks Acts' element regarding deductions from wages. I can find no Government supporters for the fundamentals of this issue.

The Government will say, "We carried out a survey which showed that the majority of employers favoured the 10 per cent. deduction method." If one is asked whether one wants to be shot in the left or right foot, one makes a choice, but one would prefer not to be shot in the foot because it is unnecessary. From my practical experience and from what I have read in the media and, more particularly, in my institute's journals, I can find little evidence that there is a minute case, let alone an overwhelming one, for the introduction of this element.

Obviously, there are rogue employers and rogue employees, but the law in situ is working. It is not breaking down.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): I have often heard my hon. Friend speak about industrial tribunals, and I respect his view, although I do not share it. Is he suggesting that he would prefer the existing Truck Acts which cover this part of the Bill to remain in force without the built-in protection which he must acknowledge will be given to workers by limiting the deduction to 10 per cent. of pay?

Mr. Holt: My experience is that the law is known and understood by, and working for, the most humble in the land to the most eminent members of the Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Directors. The Minister may argue that greater protection is being afforded to employees, and I believe that he sincerely thinks that. However, I cannot accept that, because I believe that the scenario put forward by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar is much more realistic in this context. As I understand the Bill—I am willing to be corrected —the protection that the Government are affording is only that deductions will be limited to 10 per cent. of pay, and that if a person goes to a tribunal, that money must be repaid without compensation.

Ms. Short: In Committee and today we have talked as though the 10 per cent. protection will extend to all workers, but that is not so. It applies only to workers in retailing for cash shortages and stock deficiencies, not for lateness or absenteeism. Therefore, only a small group of workers will be protected by the 10 per cent. provision.

Mr. Holt: I accept that, and it is a reason why I am puzzled why the Government are introducing this element as such an enormous protection. In my 30 years in business, no employee has ever told me a tale of an employer removing money, without the employee having a right to go to court. Employees already have that right. We are only duplicating it or, worse still, weakening it.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): There is a significant difference which I may develop if I am called to speak. Under the old law, an employer must take a worker to court and prove his guilt, but under the Bill a worker must run to an industrial tribunal and defend his innocence. That is completely different.

Mr. Holt: With respect, I think that that worked both ways. I understand that an employer will now be able to rely on an industrial tribunal.

I did not wish to develop my view on industrial tribunals at this point, but a tribunal is a lottery. All hon. Members who read my magnificent speech in December on industrial tribunals—at that time in the morning, there were not many listening—will know that the Minister accepted the Russian roulette aspect of industrial tribunals. Industrial tribunals cannot have an appeal made against them except on a point of law, whereas under the present law, if a deduction is under dispute, the full panoply of the law is available to both sides, and the case may end up in the other place or, perhaps, even in Europe. Under the Bill, that will be denied. Therefore, far from giving added protection to employees, the Minister is seeking to give extremely limited protection; it is subject to no penalty and it is a lottery. Once a case goes to an industrial tribunal, the outcome depends on how the chairman felt when he got up that morning and came to work. Either the employee or the employer will be lucky, because that is how the case will be decided. A decision will be made only on whether the deductions made up to that point were lawful, or were unlawful and must be repaid.

This seems to be legislation for the sake of legislation. The honest truth is that the Government merely intended to abolish the Truck Acts. That may have been argued and justified. However, to erect a smokescreen by suggesting that they are being replaced by something superior, fairer and nicer simply does not hold water. It does not bear examination. The Government's case is wafer-thin, and water is seeping through.

Even at this late stage I suggest that my hon. Friend the Minister has a deathbed repentance on this aspect of the Bill. Then, some of us could with much greater heart support other parts of the Bill which we favour. I seek to be fair and discriminating by supporting the parts which are good law and by not supporting those which are bad law. The Government have produced bad law on this aspect, and it will not be long before it will bring the whole Bill into disrepute. I do not want that.

In his intervention, the Minister made it clear that in reply he would seek to justify this element by saying that it gives additional benefit to employees by making industrial tribunals available—I promise that we shall talk more about industrial tribunals later—and by staggering repayments over two, three or more months —[*Interruption.*] Did I hear something about 10 o'clock tomorrow morning? We cannot expect the country to support Conservative Governments and Ministers —[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—if they introduce bad laws for which there is no public support. There is no public support for the abolition of the Truck Acts from professional, managerial, trade union or working people. There is none. Apart from a place which I am not supposed to mention, I can find little support for these proposals.

Whenever I speak on this very serious subject, I try to introduce a light-hearted tone. The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) and I have debated this issue several times, and he knows that hon. Members should not be misled by my style. I have spoken to many of my right hon. and hon. Friends who are not all in the Chamber today, and I think that I reflect their views when I say that the Government have impaled themselves on something similar to the Shops Bill. The Government should listen to what their Back Benchers are saying, especially if those Back Benchers are in touch with industry and commerce.

I have yet to be shown any evidence to support this part of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Minister must make his case, or we shall be here for a long time. If he does not make his case, I shall carry on asking question after question, trying to find what justification there is for introducing such a deduction. Regardless of whether the employee is highly or lowly paid, the deduction is very immoral. It is immoral to take money away from people without justification or proof and without any recourse to a normal court. That part of the Bill does not merit my support. The Government are seeking not merely to throw out the baby with the bath water but to throw out the bath too.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): I rise to support the amendment, and am greatly encouraged by some of the comments of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). In Committee, there were one or two exchanges on this issue, and perhaps our points have now sunk into Conservative minds. If the hon. Gentleman is joined by some of his colleagues tonight, there may be one or two dramatic changes to the Bill.

In the early stages of the Bill, we said that we thought that it was the Government's original intention to abolish wages councils altogether. But they realised that it was such an outrageous idea that they retained the Bill while nobbling its contents.

5.45 pm

The Truck Acts date back more than 150 years to 1831. The Government are making these alterations for the sake of change. They certainly will not benefit the workers and that is why, in Committee, Opposition Members resisted the Bill with great tenacity and conviction for two and a half months. The Minister will probably say that there will be a contract. That is true, but we object to the fact that the contract is to be solely on the employer's terms. We frequently pointed out that in such desperate times, with 4 million people unemployed, low-paid workers—who are the subject of this Bill—may be induced or forced to accept intolerable conditions just for the sake of the job.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) pointed out, the employer's entitlement to make weekly deductions is quite outrageous. There is no onus on the employer to make a case for the deduction. We contend that the employer could be dishonest about his case for deciding to withhold part of an employee's weekly wage packet. Time and again we have said that if there is any dishonesty—something that we would not defend—the matter should be pursued through the courts. The police could be brought in and a case could be made. Thus the employer could prosecute in a court or dismiss the man. There are options other than the one that seems to have the Minister's favour.

For the first five or six weeks in Committee the Minister kept on saying that employees could go to an industrial tribunal. But during one sitting he suddenly said that he did not want too many appeals to be made to tribunals as that might clog up the works. He implied that the odd case might be all right, but that people should not pursue their rights too often.

Mr. Holt: I believe that that point coincided with a written question to the Minister from me. I asked him what

[Mr. Holt]

provision he was making for additional courts or tribunals. He replied that he was making none, and suddenly the need for tribunals also waned.

Mr. Eastham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention.

Hon Members on both sides of the Committee then pursued the Minister about the provision being made for personnel, and so on. The Minister said that there would be other people. On another occasion, he suddenly mentioned ACAS, as though that might make up for the deficiencies in wages inspectors. We found it less than convincing that the Minister should say in one breath that someone could go to an appeal tribunal and then say in another that he did not want too many appeals as they might clog up the works. That did not show any great enthusiasm for justice for the workers.

The amendment makes a good case. If a worker goes to a tribunal, he may incur considerable personal expense. He will have to take time off work, and he probably will not be compensated for it. For all we know, the appeal tribunal may not be in his town, and he may have to pay the cost of travelling 10 or 15 miles in order to prove his innocence. Indeed, after spending time and money he may be found innocent, but he has no apparent right to be reinstated or compensated. Because of that, we are correct in saying that it is a worthy amendment and the Minister should give real consideration to it.

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman made an interesting and valuable point about the fares that people have to pay. The hon. Gentleman realises that the fares are available to anyone going to a tribunal if he has to travel over six miles. These fares are paid out of public money. The money does not come from a respondent who may have flouted the law in getting an appellant to the tribunal in the first place.

Mr. Eastham: The hon. Gentleman has reminded me that people who have to travel a certain distance will receive compensation. Nowadays, it costs a small fortune to travel on public transport, even if one is travelling only three or four miles. There is a considerable penalty on those who must undertake two journeys.

When a worker proves that he has a legitimate claim, he should have certain rights. If the Minister were fair minded, he would say that there is justification for what we are saying and he is prepared to put that part of the Bill right. We do not like the Bill. We object to it clause by clause, but at least we are trying to make it more just than it is.

We contend that there should be penalties for an employer as well as an employee. I have never known anything as one-sided as the Bill. The Bill contains next to no penalties whatsoever for an employer. For those reasons, I hope that the Minister will be sympathetic and give serious thought to the matter.

Mr. Nellist: I have spent the best part of three months considering the Bill in a Committee Room. It is interesting that of all the Tory Members who sat silent during the Committee's consideration of the Bill, only a couple are now prepared to sit in the Chamber during the debate. Be that as it may, the central importance of proposed new clause 9 relates to part I of the Bill which deals with the right of an employer to make deductions. The tone and tenor of the Bill and of the Government's general approach to working people in British society are set in line 2 of clause 1 which states:

"An employer shall not make any deduction from any wages of any worker of his".

That is the possessive nature of the kind of society the Tory Government would like to see. The hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean)——

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Unamended.

Mr. Nellist: Yes, unamended. The hon. Member for Penrith and The Border introduced a description in Committee of the relationship between master and servant. He thought that the Bill epitomised that description. It is necessary for us to attempt to amend, at Report stage, the language and principles of that part of the Bill. My comrade the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) said in Committee that the Tory Government are only interested in workers insofar as they are interested in the appendages at the end of their two arms. That description came out in the debate on that part of the Bill.

Unless we succeed in adding the new clause and making the consequent amendments to part I, employers will be given power to discipline workers by fining them. Clause 1 is one-sided. It gives power to employers to deduct the wages of workers, albeit with a maximum limit of 10 per cent., without even making mandatory the joint signature of an employer and a worker in an agreement that that is the case. No doubt we shall deal with that specific point later.

The Bill weakens the current position under the Truck Acts as to the power of employers to make deductions. Central to the arguments which other comrades have already deployed, it reverses the whole concept of what we, and, no doubt you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were told at school—that under British law a person is innocent until he is taken to court and proved guilty. The Bill allows an employer to be the judge, jury and executioner. An employer may implement his decision by imposing a fine, saying, as a concession to a worker, "Go to an industrial tribunal, if you wish to do so, to prove and defend your innocence, because I, as an employer, have decided that you are guilty."

Ms. Clare Short: The position is even worse than that described by my hon. Friend. I am sure he agrees that it is possible for a worker to face a fine, go to a tribunal and prove his innocence but, because an employer can say that under the contract of employment the employer is entitled to impose a fine, he cannot have it overturned. Even if a worker proves his innocence, he can still be subjected to a fine.

Mr. Nellist: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. I hope to return to the point later. To add to the point that she made, third parties could be involved, which could be established by the tribunal, but the power would exist for an employer to make the original deduction. As a result of information coming from embassies, certain immigration procedures, such as those which applies when people appear at airports and points of entry, have been tightened up. In most British legislation there is a concept that a person is innocent until he is proved guilty. The Bill turns that concept on its head.

Let us imagine that an employer discovers that there is a shortage of stock or a shortage of money in the till. There could be a number of reasons for that. It could be because

of poor management or a lack of supervision of those working on the till or doing the stock checks. It could be due to the systems that are set up for stock control. It could even be due to the fact that too few workers are employed in a certain section and the work load causes stress and strain. The Bill does not attempt to deal with problems such as those. It merely gives an employer the immediate right of fining an employee whom he considers caused a problem. It could be that a third party, some other person, is responsible for the condition. In that event, an employer can say, "Go and prove your innocence in an industrial tribunal."

Ms. Clare Short: Is my hon. Friend aware of the report of the employment unit at the law centre of north Kensington entitled "Fingers in the Till"? The report demonstrates that many stock shortages are caused by incompetent organisation, such as when a shop reduces prices but fails to knock the values off the notional stock. The shop thinks that it has a shortage but it does not. It is perfectly possible that the shortages are no one's fault but are due to incompetent organisation.

Mr. Nellist: My hon. Friend has referred to the example I gave of the possibility of a stock or till shortage occurring. The Kensington law centre, citizens' advice bureaux and my own legal and advice service in Coventry are aware of cases. Labour Members of the Committee received a number of documents and affidavits. We were given thousands of examples of individual workers in the retail trade and the petrol industry who were fined for actions which were not of their own doing—a third party or incompetence was the main reason. Workers are offered that option to prove their innocence before an industrial tribunal.

Difficulties are associated with appearing before the tribunal. A worker would lose a day's pay by taking that opportunity to prove his innocence. He might have to pay for legal assistance. Character witnesses would lose wages. Even if the worker won his case, he would get back only the money that had been deducted in the first instance by the employer.

6 pm

In most cases, the worker is likely to be someone on low pay. In Committee, the Under-Secretary of State made some points about that. A low-paid worker in receipt of family income supplement whose employer deducted the maximum of 10 per cent. of the gross wage from net take-home pay, after tax and national insurance deductions, might appeal through the normal appeal channels. His net pay might then be below the family income supplement level and he would be worse off than workers in a similar position. According to the letter of 8 April, by the Under-Secretary of State for Employment—the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier)—it would not be possible for that worker then to claim additional family income supplement.

The Government lay down definitions stating the level below which the income of a family which includes a certain number of children should ever fall; yet the Bill would allow an employer to make deductions from a worker's wages which could take him below the poverty line defined by the Government, and he would have no redress.

The Under-Secretary of State held out a rather funny lifeline. In a letter written on 11 March, he stated that if it were proved before an industrial tribunal that a deduction was incorrectly made, it was possible for the worker to appeal to the independent Inland Revenue tax commissioners for a tax rebate on that deduction. A worker on £100 a week gross, which is a pretty high wage in the service sector, whose net take-home pay was £65 or £68 a week could lose up to £10 in deductions because the employer had accused him of being responsible for a till or stock shortage. That worker could go to the tax commissioners and attempt to claim £3·30 of that sum. What a farce. If an employer suspects that an employee is a thief, he should take the employee to court where the burden of proof should rest on the employer.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I am not an expert on the Bill and was not a member of the Committee. What I have heard is appalling and unbelievable. Do I understand that clause 9 as it stands turns the whole basis of British jurisprudence on its head? The whole of our law is based on a person being innocent until proved guilty. The clause does the very opposite. This clause alone is a massive step. I hope that the Bill does not turn the whole of British jurisprudence on its head. If the clause does that, it is almost a crime to put it before the House.

Mr. Nellist: I am sorry to disappoint my hon. Friend, but the clauses do not get any better. Until 1979, our youth were taught in schools that a person was innocent until proved guilty by a jury of 12 of his peers. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) eloquently summed up in fewer words than I have used what the clause does—it turns British jurisprudence on its head. People will be assumed to be guilty. They will need to prove their innocence before an industrial tribunal.

A full-time worker who has not worked continuously for two years or a part-time worker who has worked fewer than 30 hours a week and has not been in the job for five years can go back to the employer the day after winning the case in the industrial tribunal and, at the flick of a finger, the employer can sack him. The worker cannot go back to the industrial tribunal a second time to ask for his job back, because he would not qualify.

Mr. Dixon: If an employer sacked an employee, could it not take the whole of his lying-on pay to pay the rest of the fine?

Mr. Nellist: That is correct.

Most of the workers affected by the Bill earn £60, £70 or £80 a week. We are talking about an employer's power to deduct 10 per cent. from gross wages, which means £6, £7 or £8 a week. Unlike most Tory Members, many of whom count their income in tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds a year, the workers about whom we are talking have only one job. They are not like the right hon. and learned Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon) with his 35 jobs—one as a Member of Parliament, one as a QC in the law courts and one as director of a company and with 32 chairmanships under his belt. The right hon. and learned Gentleman might be able to afford to have deducted from his pay packet 10 per cent. of the income from one of those 35 jobs. A poorly paid worker in a time of mass unemployment—when 4·5 million people are denied the chance to work—tries to bring up his family on £60, £70 or £80 a week, yet an employer may have the

[Mr. Nellist]

power to deduct 10 per cent. of his wages without needing to prove that a crime has taken place. Labour Members oppose that.

On 11 February, the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment described this part of the Bill as providing a

"fairer set of statutory rights concerning deductions"—[*Official Report*, 11 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. 801.]

The Bill does not mention that the deductions must be fair and reasonable. It turns the concept of justice upside down on its head. It allows employers to decide guilt and say to the workers, "You have the opportunity before an industrial tribunal to attempt to prove your innocence." The measure will be used mainly against low-paid workers—as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said, mainly those in areas where trade unions are not yet predominant in industry. For all those reasons and for others, which no doubt my hon. Friends will give, I urge the House to adopt the new clause and the consequent amendments and to defeat this part of the Bill.

Mr. Pendry: I shall not take too long, because the points made by Labour Members and by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) have shown that this part of the Bill and, indeed, the whole Bill, are nonsense. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh must not believe that the sanctity of marriage will necessarily be preserved by a Government as hellbent on deregulation as this one. The Under-Secretary of State might address his remarks to that.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) is present and to make the point he did, and that we have a wider audience, although it is not much wider, than in Committee.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): It is a good audience.

Mr. Pendry: Yes, it is a good audience. My hon. Friends are beginning to understand—I do not blame them—the ramifications of the legislation. As a result of the debate on this and other clauses, the people outside the House will also begin to understand what will hit them.

The decency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) always shines through on these occasions. He began in Committee by referring to the Minister as a "chum". He has gone down a little and called him a "decent chap". I suspect that my hon. Friend, because he is decent and so perceptive, probably knows something that we do not know. I want therefore to finish my speech, soon so that I can hear the reply by the Under-Secretary of State to our points. It may be that, because last Thursday Rossendale went Labour for the first time in its history, the hon. Gentleman is a little shaken and is rocking a little. He might therefore listen more attentively to what people, especially his constituents, say.

I am pleased that my hon. friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) made it plain that this does not just affect low-paid workers. The clause affects a whole range of workers in this country. Of course, the Opposition are mostly concerned about low-paid workers, because a 10 per cent. deduction is bad enough for some workers—we think it is too much—but for the workers we represent, such as home workers, cleaners and many others, it is an unbearable burden for them to have to endure.

Ms. Clare Short: It is very important that we all remember that it is not just 10 per cent. There is a limit of 10 per cent. per week for workers in retailing, but for all other workers there is no limit. We must not mislead the public into thinking that it is only 10 per cent., bad as that is, because the sky is the limit.

Mr. Pendry: I was just about to make the point that that is the bottom line. The deduction is open-ended and the ramifications are such that, when the full force of our case is heard outside, I believe that the Government will be forced to think again and, not for the first time, will have to retrack their legislation in a short space of time.

As I have said, most of the points have already been made and it would be silly to go over them again. However, the workers involved in this part of the Bill are certainly proved guilty before they have even had a trial. The employers have it all their own way under the Bill at present.

Many of the points made in Committee have not been listened to clearly by the Minister. However, at times he did attempt to answer our points and said that he would reflect on them and come back to us. I hope that this is one occasion when the Minister will answer the forceful points made in Committee and on the Floor of the House much more positively and constructively.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) got it right again. I do not want to praise him too much because it could damn him with his colleagues. Unfortunately, he has made great points, but he has not voted with us in the Lobby. I hope that on this occasion he will have the courage. It is no good making those points and sounding reasonable if, at the end of the day, he does not join us in the Lobby. No doubt he will attract a great deal of attention in his local press.

Mr. Holt: I would just like to comment on the hon. Gentleman's point about the local press. We are discussing the Wages Bill, on which it might be thought that I was being a little bit naughty to my own side, on the same day as the Government announced the closure of Smith's Dock in my constituency.

Mr. Pendry: I am sure that that has reinforced the hon. Gentleman's position in supporting us on this occasion.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh rightly said that the law should be a backstop for industrial relations. I should have thought that the Conservative party had learned its lesson. They began trying to introduce legislation in a heavy-handed way in the early 1970s and they had to shelve that legislation because it clearly did not work. My bet is that this legislation will be shelved in a similar way. I certainly wish to hear the Minister disprove that and perhaps he can make an early start by agreeing to the points that have been made by my hon. Friends in this debate.

6.15 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): We should cast our minds back to the Second reading of the Bill, especially when we are dealing with part 1 in relation to the Truck Acts. The case argued by the Government was, at surface value, probably correct. The Truck Act of 1831 probably needed some amendment and refining and we probably needed a new act to be put on the statute book to give some support and protection to workers. In fact, we have seen a complete reversal of the Truck Acts and what they stood for.

The fundamental principles of the Truck Act of 1831 was "fair and reasonable". The Truck Acts stood for a certain amount of justice. That is not to say that we must keep the Truck Acts on the statute book for ever more. However, one would have hoped that the fundamental principles of the Truck Acts, which have been tried and tested, would have remained. I have worked in industry for a number of years and have had dealings with the Truck Acts. I know they have operated well and the employers and trade unions have taken on board the fundamental principles and tried to develop them in negotiations when the Truck Acts have been involved.

Many hon. Members, especially from the Opposition, who were not on the Committee, have been aghast at what is in section 1. Clause 1 of the Bill has turned natural justice on its head. A worker now has to prove his innocence after being found guilty. That moves away completely from the underlying position of the Truck Acts which clause 1 of the Bill is supposed to update.

Nobody in the House has defended the Government's position. It would be difficult for the alliance to defend the Government's position, because there are no alliance Members in the Chamber. They have not tabled any amendments to the Bill, let alone to clause 1. That is deplorable, when the alliance is always stating that it is a protector of workers' rights. Having said that, nobody has come to the defence of the Minister. In fact, he has been attacked by his own party for the position the Government have taken on clause 1.

When the Minister opposes the new clause, I have no doubt that the defence will rest on the industrial tribunals. Many points have been made as to how there are blockages in the industrial tribunals, and how difficult and expensive it is for people. In low-paid areas people may be fearful of going to industrial tribunals.

Many low-paid workers have been employed for less than two years. Also, the restrictions within those establishments could debar many people who could be caught under this part of the Bill from using the tribunals, even if they wanted to.

In Committee I think that I clearly illustrated what we are talking about. It was brought to my attention that in one of the country clubs in Sheffield—there are not many of them—the owner had sacked four employees. Not only had he sacked them, but he owed them between £150 and £200. They did not even know the reasons for their sacking. When they tried to extract the reasons from the owner, he said that they had been sacked for stealing and dishonesty. They were absolutely flabbergasted. There are a number of courses they can adopt. They can go to tribunals or the courts. However, that is the type of employer that many people will have to deal with. When natural justice is turned on its head, those people have greater licence than before. The principles that were originally emobdied in the Truck Acts should be adhered to in the Bill. However, they will be turned on their head, and there will be less protection for the workers than previously.

When we were discussing part I of the Bill in Committee, we brought fraud to the Minister's attention. That was reported in the *Financial Times* of 13 March, which showed that 40 per cent. of United Kingdom companies are now experiencing fraud, and in London alone there was £867 million-worth of fraud, which had been notified to the police and the fraud squad. We are trying to deal with fraud, yet in the Bill we are taking away a fundamental right and turning British justice on its head; we are attacking the lowest paid in our society, and taking away their protection.

I hope that Conservative Members have listened to the only constructive statement to have come from Conservative Benches, totally opposing part I and the removal of those basic principles. I hope that having done so, many of the colleagues of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) will support new clause 9 in the Lobby.

Mr. Dixon: I shall confine my remarks to our amendments Nos. 43 and 44, which will protect workers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) was astonished at part I. I should like to tell him that it gets worse. Throughout the Bill, we are talking about deductions. They mean fines. When the Bill is on the statute book, the employer will have the right to fine his employee without getting or submitting any evidence.

We are talking about part-time or low-paid workers, and many employees who are not covered by trade unions. If an employee has the audacity to go to an industrial tribunal, to prove his innocence, there is nothing to stop the employer sacking the individual. It is not just the individual. There might be a stock deficiency or cash shortage in the till, and two, three or four employees might be sharing the till or looking after the stock. Under the Bill, the employer has the right to fine the four employees 10 per cent. of their salaries for the stock deficiency or cash shortage. That is what the Bill is about.

We must accept that, in the working class movement, we have one or two rascals who might steal from the till. But the Conservative party might have one or two reasonable Members to support our amendment.

However, if someone stole, the rest of his workmates could be fined by the employer. That is one of the reasons why we have tabled amendment No. 43, which will protect the employee against being sacked if he has the audacity to take his employer to an industrial tribunal, simply to prove his innocence. Under amendment No. 43, a worker may present a complaint to a tribunal

"that the employer has not shown that the worker concerned was guilty of the act or omission complained of".

Under the Bill, the employer does not have to have any evidence. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said, there could be a deficiency because of a fault in the till. If the employer found a deficiency, he could fine all his employees 10 per cent. of their wages.

Amendment No. 44 concerns industrial tribunals. If the worker goes ahead and takes the chance of getting the sack from his employer by going to an industrial tribunal to prove his innocence, and if he proves himself innocent, the only thing that the employer is obliged to do is to give the employee the 10 per cent. of his wages that he previously stole. There is no recompense, compensation or expenses. My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) made that point. I think that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) will agree with this. At times, people from Newcastle have to go to Darlington for industrial tribunals, and vice versa. Because one works in Newcastle, that does not mean that the tribunal will sit in Newcastle. It might be in Jarrow, Langbaurgh or somewhere else.

[Mr. Dixon]

We are talking about employees, some of whom are receiving the princely sum of £57 a week. They will have to find the fares to go to the industrial tribunal, take time off work and take the chance of getting the sack. If they require a witness, the witness will have to be prepared to sacrifice his wages and pay expenses to prove the employee's innocence. That is what we are dealing with in part I. It is only the tip of the iceberg, I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Hillsborough.

I believe that our amendments Nos. 43 and 44 give some safeguards. They do not make the Bill more palatable for people who have any concern about low-paid workers or other employees, but at least it is better than what we have at the moment. I hope that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh and one or two of his colleagues who have listened to the debate will join us in the Lobby. Not one person has defended part I or clause 5. One would have thought that those who supported the Minister in Committee would defend him tonight, but not one has done so. The only contribution from Conservative Benches has been an attack on this part of the Bill. I hope that some Conservative Members will join us in the Lobby.

Mr. Trippier: We have had the opportunity to debate at length the principal issue behind the amendments, which is the deduction from wages. We had some interesting and long debates in Committee. Wherever possible, I have tried to meet the concern of some Opposition Members. There is evidence of that on the Order Paper because we shall move amendments aimed at doing that.

The amendments that we are now considering go too far. I do not want to drive a wedge between my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) and his new-found friendship with Opposition Members as a result of the debate thus far, but it seems to me to be absolutely extraordinary that there is more that divides them than unites them on this issue. First, Opposition Members who have spoken so far will agree that they are in favour of industrial tribunals. The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) recognised their importance. My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh does not like them at all. He has been consistent throughout——

Mr. Holt: I am happy to be chastised for what I am guilty of, but not for what I am not guilty of. If my hon. Friend cares to read my speech in December, he will see that I am in favour of industrial tribunals, but the completely reformed variety, which takes all the legalism out of it.

Mr. Trippier: All right. So we are getting a little clearer now. My hon. Friend is in favour of reformed industrial tribunals but in the main Opposition Members are in favour of industrial tribunals——

Ms. Clare Short *rose*——

Mr. Trippier: I shall happily give way to the hon. Lady. She knows I always do.

We should not try to find some new form of cemented relationship between Opposition Members and my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh on this issue. It is clear that Conservative Members and Opposition Members do not agree about industrial tribunals. We all know, if we were to put our hands on our hearts, that these tribunals protect the worker more than the employer in the vast majority of cases.

6.30 pm

Ms. Clare Short: The Opposition, and I assume the Minister, are in favour of the existence of industrial tribunals. However, we do not think that it is right that workers should be forced to go to industrial tribunals to get basic justice and to prove their innocence. We believe that there should be reasonable law and reasonable industrial practices.

The Opposition are worried—I believe that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh agrees with us on this—although there may be disagreement between the hon. Gentleman and the Opposition about part II of the Bill—about the increase in legalism, the use of lawyers and the high expense of going to industrial tribunals. The original intention of these tribunals was that they would provide a cheap and informal procedure.

Mr. Trippier: Industrial tribunals are cheap and informal procedures. I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) that industrial tribunals are good, although my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh does not appear to share that view. My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh does not seem to believe in deductions; at least, that is what I understood from his speech. I presume that Opposition Members do not agree with the deductions either. That is very strange because the present legislation allows deductions to be made, conceivably up to a limit of 100 per cent. However, with this Bill we are building in added protection for the worker.

Opposition Members have suggested that the amendments we are considering will withdraw protection from the worker. That is not the case. Opposition Members have argued that the present legislation dating back to 1896 should continue. That is absolute nonsense. There is no logic in the argument that the present legislation should continue. It is clear from the first few clauses in this part of the Bill that we are desperately trying to protect the workers. We are especially trying to do that in relation to workers in the retail trade.

Part 1 of the Bill provides that deductions from wages or payments by workers to employers are lawful only if they are authorised by statute, by the contract of employment or by written agreement of the worker. No one has mentioned that last point so far in the debate.

Mr. Eastham: I did.

Mr. Trippier: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, I could not have heard him say that.

In addition, there are special controls of deductions relating to cash shortages or stock deficiencies and the worker has a right to complain to a tribunal about an unlawful deduction. There should be such a right. We shall move the amendment today to strengthen those controls and to ensure that workers have a copy or a written explanation of the contractual terms authorising deductions. That point was drawn to my attention in Committee by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar. The amendments will introduce a time limit on deductions relating to cash shortages or stock deficiencies and I readily accepted that point in Committee.

In Part 1 of the Bill, we already have a substantial body of controls based on the philosophy that it is best to allow

the parties involved to sort out a regime for themselves to control deductions from wages, to ensure that the regime is clearly understood and enforced.

Dr. Godman: As the Minister will know, I was not a Member of the Standing Committee. However, I have been present throughout the debate today. The Minister used the phrase "added protection given to employees". How will the Minister publicise that protection? Will his Department produce and distribute a code of practice on that point?

Mr. Trippier: It is certainly our intention to increase awareness of the new proposals that will follow when the Bill reaches the statute book. In our Department, we consider ourselves to be pretty good at that. We will go to extreme lengths to ensure that people are aware of the new regime. That point was raised in Committee and I understand why the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) should wish to raise it again. We are anxious to increase awareness not only for employees but for employers. Any changes will obviously make significant differences to the running of firms.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Trippier: I would like to deal with the specific point that the hon. Lady raised in her previous intervention. I shall deal with that point and then give way.

I must stress that 75 per cent. of cases which are intended to go to tribunals are settled before they reach a hearing. I understand that Opposition Members would always try to convince the House that it is more of a strain and inconvenience for workers to go to a tribunal than the employer. I can understand that and in some cases I believe that that is true. However, I have always argued that it is more of a strain on the employer. The evidence of the number of cases that are settled prior to an industrial tribunal bears that out.

I am also convinced from the consultation exercise that we undertook that the industrial tribunal is a disincentive to increasing employment in the private sector. I accept that my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh made that point in Committee. Private sector firms obviously do not want to suffer the hassle and trouble of going to an industrial tribunal.

I believe on balance that it is more of a disincentive to the employer than it is to the worker.

Mr. Eastham: I am sure that the Minister will recall that, when we made our observations on this clause in Committee, we contended that employers did not need to go to tribunals. They could simply go to the police. If the staff were found to be breaking the law there could be an inquiry and the employer could have recourse to a proper court of law. Such an action would not cost the Minister's Department anything.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman has missed the point that I was trying to make in Committee. There are many instances in which an employer may choose to discipline a member of his work force but he may not wish to go to the extent of dismissing that member of staff. The member of staff may have committed an offence that would be punishable in a court of law. However, the employer might choose not to pick up the telephone and call the police and all that that means. The hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley must have known employers who are decent in that way and I am sure that many hon. Members have acted in a similar manner to give someone another chance. An employer may sometimes choose not to call in the law. However, he may want to exercise the disciplinary powers that are available in the contract. That point has not been made so far in the debate — the powers must be in the contract. All hon. Members, irrespective of political persuasion, should welcome the fact that in some instances matters do not have to be taken to the police.

Ms. Clare Short: I believe that it was the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) who suggested in Standing Committee that ACAS might be asked to draw up a recommended contract covering the Minister's points. Speaking from memory, I believe that the Minister said that he thought that that was a useful suggestion and that he would consider it. That suggestion paralleled the proposal from my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) that there should be a code of practice. I hope that the Minister will proceed with that point and not forget it.

Mr. Trippier: That is a fair point to make. I seem to remember the exchange of views that we had on these matters in Committee, and I will certainly bear that point in mind. If I did not make it crystal clear, and if this point is not obvious in the *Hansard* record of the Committee, I will say that it would be a good idea to have a draft form of contract prepared by ACAS. That point should be made known to increase awareness.

Five principal issues are dealt with in this set of amendments and the new clause. First, it is proposed that all deductions for disciplinary purposes should be limited to 10 per cent. of gross wages.

Of course, the Government have introduced such limits to control deductions related to cash shortages and stock deficiencies, as that is the area of contemporary concern and abuse.

Mr. Mikardo: Rubbish.

Mr. Holt: If a pieceworker botches up an entire lot that he has been given to manufacture, whatever it is, will he still be paid 90 per cent. and have only a disciplinary stricture of 10 per cent.?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend could not be more wrong. I assume that my hon. Friend is talking about a pieceworker in manufacturing industry, not in the retail business. If it is in the contract that deductions can be made, the Bill's provision to limit deductions to 10 per cent. on pay day will not apply. That does not apply outside the retail sector. I shall try to develop that.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar said, sotto voce, that it is rubbish that evidence shows that there is abuse. I must assure him that that is the case. In the consultation exercise, to which I referred on a number of occasions in Committee, the evidence was clear. The hon. Gentleman gave the House examples of what could happen in certain instances, but there is no evidence that that has proved to be a problem. But, trying to be reasonable, as I have endeavoured to be with the hon. Gentleman throughout, if there were evidence that that was causing concern, obviously I would look at it. Incidentally, the situation that he described exists at the moment under the present law. I am sure that he understands that. I cannot put it any clearer. We are changing that situation but still building in the protection for the worker.

Mr. Mikardo: As we are legislating we should improve conditions and there is no improvement here. Under the present law and under the Bill, I repeat, a worker can have a deduction made for a shortage that does not exist or for a shortage that does exist for which he is not in the least responsible. What sort of a condition is that? Why are we not legislating to get rid of that gross injustice?

Mr. Trippier: As I have said, and as I know that the hon. Gentleman will recognise, we have tried desperately in the Bill to strike a fair balance. We must recognise on the one hand that employers who are concerned about cash deficiencies and stock shortages will not take on more people unless they have the power to deduct. Many would say that, rather than press ahead with running a business which is so much of an encumbrance and becoming incredibly bureaucratic, thanks to the Government introducing so much legislation which acts as a brake on enterprise, they will not go ahead. They will pack up. If they have any money left they will invest it in gilt-edged stocks in the stock exchange.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Trippier: I am desperately trying to get on. I have allowed a number of interventions.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar referred to the Lord Chief Justice. The situation that the hon. Gentleman described is exactly the same. If the employer is to have the right of making deductions from pay taken away from him, he will not take on more workers. That is a lifeline for those businesses that are dealing with cash. We have given all sorts of examples of garage forecourts, cigarette kiosks and so on. If those who operate such businesses —hon. Members should be glad of them because they are serious employers—do not have the right to make deductions, they will simply say that because of the problems that they have experienced—there is evidence of them—they will simply not carry on running such businesses. That is the sad and tragic alternative.

6.45 pm

I still say that it is better to leave disciplinary procedures and general limits on disciplinary deductions to be determined between employers, workers and trade unions, again short of dismissing people. That is a good alternative. Under the Bill, a worker suffering a disciplinary deduction can complain to a tribunal if he has not agreed or consented to it and if it was not provided for in his contract. That is surely sufficient protection.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The Minister mentioned industrial tribunals and the fact that workers can go to them. He must know that a tribunal can award against an employee going to it if it feels that the claim was not justified. Therefore, the Minister is not giving the full facts to the House when he says that a person can go to an industrial tribunal, when he knows that if he goes along that particular road he runs a risk of having to pay the employer's costs, legal fees and whatever other expenses have been incurred.

Mr. Trippier: I know that the hon. Gentleman would never wittingly seek to mislead the House, but he must make it clear that the number of instances where that has arisen are minuscule. To comply with the law as it is now —nothing to do with the Truck Acts—that complaint must be frivolous or vexatious. Only a handful of people have been treated in that way and both of us should be glad about that. However, the evidence that I have brought to the House today that 75 per cent. of claims are settled outside a tribunal is more compelling than anything I have heard from the Opposition.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend must realise that what he is doing will affect many millions of people for many years. We are talking at this moment about industrial tribunals and vexatious or frivolous aspects. Most of the cases where the appellant has been found guilty by the "tribunal" and forced to pay have been where there has been a pre-hearing assessment which has gone against the appellant but the appellant has nevertheless proceeded with the case to tribunal. I have not heard whether the pre-hearing assessment scene will be introduced into this and whether, if an employee feels that he has been unjustly treated, there will be a pre-hearing assessment. I have not read of it in any of that in the Bill.

Mr. Trippier: The simple answer is that it will be. There has to be a pre-hearing assessment and my hon. Friend is right to refer to it. That will be broadly welcomed. It is perhaps a little amazing that we did not discuss that at some length in Committee, but we did not. My hon. Friend is right and I am glad to give him that assurance.

As I said, a balance must be struck. The more employees and workers are tied up in statutory controls, limiting what they can agree to in their contract, the more likely it is that employers will be reluctant to take on workers or will resort to dismissals rather than deductions.

The balance is about right in the Bill, given that we are proposing some amendments which have been brought forward in a real attempt to meet the concerns expressed by Opposition Members. That I am anxious to do, but I strongly recommend that the House rejects these amendments.

Ms. Clare Short: In the spirit of the strange love-hate relationships that are developed in Committee stages, may I pay the Minister an inverted compliment by saying that he is not at his best today.

The Minister said that the Government were trying desperately to protect workers. That is just not true. The consensus is that the Truck Acts have inadequacies but provided better protection than what is being put in their place. The Minister's only argument—I do not believe it—is that employers say that if they are not given more powers to deduct pay, they will not take on more workers. I challenge the Minister to provide me with any evidence of his claim that employers have told the Department of Employment, "We can't take on any more workers unless we have more powers to deduct."

Employers have powers under existing law to deduct up to 100 per cent. of wages. Under the Bill they may deduct up to 100 per cent. of wages except in relation to stock shortages or cash defficiencies in the retail sector. The Minister cannot pretend that the Bill improves protection.

Mr. Trippier: I was not arguing that employers were saying that they should have wider powers to make deductions. We all agree that they have considerable powers at the moment. We are restricting those powers by limiting deductions in the retail sector to 10 per cent. We believe that it is abhorrent that workers could face

deductions that were so substantial that their net take-home pay would be next to nothing. We believe that to be immoral; that is why we are introducing the legislation.

Ms. Short: As long as *Hansard* is not interfered with, it will show tomorrow what the Minister said. I wrote down his words as he said them, because this is the first time that he has introduced the argument. I do not believe his claim and my challenge stands. He said, "Employers will not take on more people unless they have power to deduct."

Employers already have the power to deduct money from workers' wages. The Government must justify their legislation, and part of the Minister's justification was to say that employers throughout the land were knocking at his door saying that they could not take on more workers unless they had the power to deduct money from their wages. I do not believe that employers have said that to the Minister.

The Minister suggested that a balance had to be struck, and we agree with him. However, the balance in the Truck Acts was a much fairer and more just balance. The balance struck in the Bill is grossly unjust. Workers who are not guilty of any dishonesty and may even be able to prove that they are not guilty of dishonesty may be subject to deductions and fines. The only way for them to clear their reputation, let alone get their money back, is for them to lose time and money in going to an industrial tribunal. We have just heard that there is to be a pre-hearing assessment, which will mean two days off work instead of one.

Even if workers prove to a tribunal that they were innocent of any act or omission leading to a loss, but their contract states that they may be subject to a deduction if there is a loss, the tribunal will not be able to reverse the deduction. If the workers win, they will get back only the money deducted from their wages. There will be no compensation for the cost of going to the tribunal and no compensation for the hurt and damage to the characters of those who are accused of being liars. In addition, the employer will have the right to dismiss workers whom he has not employed for at least two years or five years—depending on whether they are employed full-time or part-time—if he is aggrieved by the fact that they took him to a tribunal.

The Bill is an outrage. It is unjust and it will lead to more deductions and fines in the worst organised sectors of our work force. It will also lead to increased conflict and a greater sense of injustice. The Minister should have left the old law alone if he could do no better than this Bill. We reject this part of the Bill and I hope that all my hon. Friends and decent Conservative Members will vote for the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 192, Noes 249.

Division No. 178] **[6.53 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James

Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 10

PAYMENT IN CASH

'No worker who is currently paid in cash shall cease to be so paid without his or her consent.'.—*[Mr. Eastham.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Eastham: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this, it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 53, in Clause 11, page 11, line 40, at end insert

'except that no worker currently paid in cash shall cease to be so paid without agreement'.

Mr. Eastham: By moving new clause 10 and discussing with it amendment No. 53, the Opposition are

attempting to amend clause 11. I preface my remarks by saying that we recognise that millions of workers who are paid by cheque through their banks find it a completely satisfactory method. We do not propose to change that procedure. All we say is that workers should be given a choice.

The Bill gives employers all the options. The employee has virtually no say about the way in which he shall be paid. The Bill deals not with highly paid workers but with the lowest paid. It affects 2,750,000 workers. A total of 41 per cent. of workers covered by wages councils are below the European decent wage threshold. Four out of five workers in wages council industries are women. Often people say that women work just for pin money, but that is not so. Low-paid workers are desperately in need of their jobs and reasonable pay.

In our earlier debate we reminded the Minister that the Government are turning the clock back more than 150 years to the time of the Truck Acts. They were introduced to counter the dishonesty, greed and malpractices of some employers. If the Government have their way I fervently believe that once again corruption will occur. We say not that all employers are corrupt or bad, but that some are unscrupulous and must be controlled by legislation.

On Second Reading the Minister tried to justify taking away payments in cash. He said that better security would result. That is a fact. Security will be greater because no cash handling will be involved. The Minister said that employers would save up to 50p per payment if transactions went through the banks. The employer will save money, but no consideration has been given to providing matching benefits for the employee.

In the two and a half months that we considered the Bill in Committee, we were furnished with numerous documents. One of them was from the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux dealing with this aspect of the Bill. It is not a political organisation and it is therefore fair to quote some of its comments. It has an unbiased opinion in the interest of the people to whom we are referring.

The document states:

"In 1984-85 the Citizens Advice Bureaux service dealt with over 6 million enquiries: of these, 600,000 related to employment problems. A substantial proportion of employment enquiries concerned deductions from pay, non-cash wages and low pay."

Dealing directly with the right to be paid in cash the document continues:

"Citizens Advice Bureaux deal with a considerable number of people working in low-paid employment and dependent upon weekly cash wages. Many such people are unable to open a bank or building society account and even if it were possible they would find the cost of running such an account prohibitive . . . employees should retain the option to be paid in cash."

The document makes some further worthy observations. It states:

"Bureaux throughout the country have urged us to repeat the recommendation made in our original evidence paper for all employees to have the option to be paid in cash. Bureaux' experience has shown that serious practical problems do arise for people on low incomes when they no longer receive their wages in cash."

7.15 pm

The main points made by the bureaux are as follows:

"As a matter of principle, . . . all employees should be free to use the method of payment best suited to their needs. Many CAB clients do not have a bank account and few have post office savings or building society accounts. A direct change to payment into one of these can cause particular difficulties.

Those who have had problems in the past with regard to credit and are perhaps on a black list, may not be able to open a bank account. Many clients, particularly in rural areas, do not have any easy access to banks, post offices and building societies. They may be far away and only open during working hours.

Many clients without accounts have experienced hardship because of the difficulty in trying to cash cheques or crossed giros . . . The cost of getting to and from the place where cash can be drawn may be high . . .

In several cases salary cheques have not been met when presented for encashment because the employer did not have sufficient cash in his account. This can be costly for the employee who will be charged for a returned cheque and consequently may incur additional bank charges. In addition an employee will suffer hardship if wages are not received on time.

There may also be some delays between payment being made by cheque and it being cleared, which can cause hardship . . .

Some clients would have difficulty in operating a bank account. People on low incomes may depend upon cash-in-hand to maintain their budget and earn too little to allow flexibility.

In cases where transition to credit transfer has been made employees may be forced to move from weekly to monthly payments. Where the employer does not make provision for the change, the effect upon the household budget can be drastic. The attitude shown by banks towards credit can push people on low incomes into debt; there are two aspects of this:

The ease with which credit can be obtained has forced many clients into debt, often for the first time.

Banks may take unfair advantage of their creditor status and may make direct deductions for overdraft and loans. This can cause hardship, especially to those trying to clear several debts."

Those are some of the submissions and objections expressed by citizens advice bureaux throughout the country. They make a logical and compelling case and support our belief that the worker should be allowed to choose.

One or two points have not yet been mentioned in the debate. It is not uncommon for mistakes to be made in wage calculations, whether computerised or manual. Employees paid in cash can go to the wages office and have the mistake rectified immediately. The cashier will usually hand over any deficiency in the pay packet. If employees are now to be paid by bank transfer, it will take time to authorise an additional payment to rectify a mistake, and that will cause problems for employees.

It is worth emphasising that some worker groups, especially the low paid, are not familiar with banking methods and may find it difficult to keep tabs on their bank statements. Low-paid workers may not be as conscious of deficiencies in their wages. In Committee, the Minister admitted that wages inspectors had discovered underpayments of £11·9 million over a five-year period. He hastened to add that 80 per cent. of that had been retrieved. However, the number of wages inspectors is to be reduced by as much as 50 per cent., so I fear that underpayments will not be discovered and retrieved.

There is a possibility—even a probability—of further and greater underpayment as a result of the banking method that workers are to have forced upon them.

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman is becoming thoroughly confused when talking about underpayments and mistakes in calculations. The anomalies that the wages inspectors found were deliberate underpayments by employers and contraventions of wages councils' rules. Mistakes in calculation computing do not total £11·9 million.

Mr. Eastham: Whether it is a mistake in calculation or a deliberate underpayment, the suffering is the same for

[Mr. Eastham]

low-paid workers. I am concerned not about the reason for any deficiency, but about workers receiving their full entitlement.

Mr. Nellist: When genuine mistakes are made in the wages of workers in wages councils industries, where employees are paid weekly in cash, they are put right within a week. The system proposed in the Bill allows employers to use monthly bank transfers, so mistakes would take a month to rectify.

Mr. Eastham: My hon. Friend is correct. We are talking about workers earning only £55, £65 or £75 a week, when the average weekly manual wage is £165 or £170 a week.

Mr. Holt: With respect, we are not talking about that. It does not help the hon. Gentleman's case to make false statements. This legislation covers everyone's cash payment up to any figure—it does not cover only low-paid workers. The hon. Gentleman must please get this right.

Mr. Eastham: I accept that the Bill covers all manual workers, but I am emphasising the position of the low-paid. Hardship is greater among them than among those earning £160 or £170 a week. We must concentrate our attention on that.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) said, the switch from weekly to monthly pay will be agonising for some groups of workers. The difficulty will be compounded because of low wages and the difficulty of even trying to earn a living. All fair-minded people must be concerned about the effects of the Bill, and especially about this clause which will cause extreme hardship to the low paid.

Mr. Caborn: Does my hon. Friend agree that many shift workers, especially those paid late on a Friday night, will find the proposed system very difficult? Currently they receive cash in the hand, which they can give to their wives for the week-end shopping.

Does my hon. Friend further agree that no one—the trade unions, industry, the CBI or the banks—wants the course proposed in the Bill? Does it not show the illiteracy of the Government in dealing with industry?

Mr. Eastham: My hon. Friend is correct in all that he says. The Minister said in Committee that facilities were available for those who were unable to get to the bank before it closed. He said that, for example, they could go to the Post Office. However, the Post Office has now said that a charge of 50p will be made to cash cheques on a Saturday morning. People may be faced with all sorts of charges when trying to obtain their wages. At present, a worker receives his pay packet on pay day and he faces no charges. Conservative Members may say that free banking is available provided one stays in credit, but there is no guarantee that the banks will not change their policy. A banking crisis might result in a charge of 25p for every withdrawal, which will mean that the low paid will suffer a wage reduction.

It seems that the Government are intent on giving rights only to employers. Employers will be able to tell their workers, "From next month you will be paid through the bank, and not in cash." A worker's bank may be 12 miles from his village, he might find that after six months he incurs bank charges in obtaining his wages and the employer may decide to introduce monthly pay instead of weekly pay. There is no provision in the clause to oblige the employer to make compensatory allowances to tide over the worker who is to receive no wages for three weeks. Employees are being denied a choice, and that is why we have tabled the clause.

7.30 pm

The Bill deteriorates clause by clause. It is a Robin-Hood-in-reverse Bill. The Government are seeking to rob the poor to give to the rich. The emphasis is in one direction, and certainly not towards employees. For these reasons, I hope that the House will support the clause.

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): I support strongly the arguments advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham). It is a modest new clause. The Bill — especially clause 11, which will abolish the Truck Acts—will cause heartbreak in many tens of thousands of families. In working-class households there is something almost mystical about the pay packet. The employee has worked for the week, and has worked hard. He has put in his hours and as a reward he receives the coin of the realm in a packet. The pay packet has a great significance to many working-class families. The new clause does not provide that all workers should be entitled to payment in cash. It provides merely that those who have been paid in coin of the realm throughout their working lives shall continue to be paid in that way if they so desire.

I have no doubt that the Government will say that there are many anomalies in the Truck Acts, some of which go back to 1831. That may be. It may be right that the anomalies should be ironed out, but we must not throw away the baby with the bath water, which is what the Government are trying to do in clause 11.

My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry South-East (Mr. Nellist) talked about the pay packet and mistakes or otherwise, but I do not wish to talk about the employer who tries deliberately to mislead and to defraud his employee. Let us say that a mistake is made by someone in the accounting department and a man or a woman receives the wrong wages. When the employee receives his pay packet, he will open it and read the statement. If there is an error, he will be in the pay office within 10 minutes of receiving the pay packet. He will not be able to do that at the end of the month when he receives his bank statement, and he may well be in that position as a result of the Bill.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am not clear how monthly payments have come to feature in the debate. There is nothing in the Bill to suggest that payments will be made monthly. Surely it is open to an employer to pay weekly or monthly.

Mr. Oakes: I have never suggested that the employee will be paid monthly. I do not know the hon. Gentleman's bank, but I receive a monthly statement. I am never supplied with a weekly statement. I have no doubt that I would be supplied with a weekly statement if I requested it, but it would be necessary to ask specifically for that arrangement. The banks will not want the scheme that is envisaged in the Bill if it will involve the issuing of weekly statements.

Ms. Clare Short: Experience and practice tells us that when employers move to cashless pay they seek to move

also to monthly pay. That is the way in which employers move in the real world. That has been the experience in retailing and local government, for example. Employers do this because they can make two sets of savings at the same time.

Mr. Oakes: Yes, that is practice and experience in the real world. Unfortunately the Government do not understand the real world and what happens in it.

In many areas — I have no doubt that what I am about to say will be endorsed by my hon. Friends the Members for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), for Wigan (Mr. Stott), and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), and by many Conservative Members — it is traditional for a man, especially an older working man, to take his pay packet home and give it to his wife. There is nothing sexist about that. The man does so because his wife is the controller of the household. She will know how much she has to pay for children's shoes and she knows the price of meat, for example. She has to plan and to budget, poor woman. The man merely hands over his pay packet. Imagine what the position will be when that pattern of a lifetime changes and the man returns to his wife and says, "I have no pay packet. My money is in the bank."

The Truck Acts were designed to protect the worker against employers' abuses. They prevented employers and their pals paying in the form of tokens that could be exchanged only in shops owned by them, their brothers or their brothers-in-law. The Government may say that that can no longer happen, but it can. Banks can exploit their customers, and they can do so mercilessly. If a bank account is opened by someone who has never had one previously, I have no doubt that the bank will invite him or her to have a credit card. It will say, "You are entitled to a credit card and perhaps you would like to apply for one." It may even supply one gratuitously.

I attended a lecture last week at which a distinguished theologian was talking about the modern world. She made a good point about credit cards being a misnomer. They are debt cards, not credit cards. Those who supply the cards want the holders to get into debt; they do not give them anything. Think of the misery that can be created by someone who is not used to the credit card system. He or she might well be used to having cash in the cupboard to pay the rates or the rent. Suddenly this individual is given unlimited finance through a credit card. The Government cannot say that the banks do not do this because we know that they do. My hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) has a thick dossier on the banks' treatment of students. They advance ludicrous sums to students who are receiving only a pittance in the form of grants. These ludicrous sums cannnot possibly be repaid. I have no doubt that the banks would treat ordinary working people in the same way.

If the Paymaster General or I live some distance from a bank and we find on arrival that the cash till is closed and it is necessary to go to the next branch, or if we find that there is no dispenser from which we can obtain cash on a Saturday or Sunday, we can drive to a branch where we know that there is a cashpoint. The ordinary working person we are talking about will not have a car. He will not be able to travel as easily as the right hon. and learned Gentleman or myself to a branch where there is a cash dispenser.

This is a retrograde step. The Truck Acts were intended to defend the right of working people to be paid what they had earned in the coin of the realm. The Government claim to believe in choice, but they are denying workers the choice to be paid in real money. I envisage endless difficulties resulting from the repeal of the Truck Acts. I envisage much hardship in many homes because many people will not understand that the pattern of a lifetime has been changed.

Nobody wants change. Neither employers, the banks nor trade unions want it. The Government will listen to nobody. They insist on pushing the change through in the face of universal opposition. The Under-Secretary of State for Employment represents a constituency in the north-west. He should know how things work in working-class households. I hope that the Paymaster General, whose roots are in the working class—his is a significant title in this context—will realise that this is the wrong way in which to treat working people.

Mr. Trippier: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way and I appreciate that he referred to my right hon. and learned Friend and me in pleasant terms. Does he not know that he is absolutely wrong to say that employers do not want the Bill? Even ICI, which is represented in his constituency at Blackley, cannot wait for it to be enacted——

Ms. Clare Short: The employers want it.

Mr. Trippier: It is not a case of money for them. They are sick to the back teeth of robberies of the cash that is brought through the factory gates. Many employers want the Bill.

Mr. Oakes: I can understand that some employers do not like paying a security firm to bring the wages in. We should take account of that, but we should also take account of the working person's right to be paid in real money. The employee should be able to choose whether to put the money in the bank. Many people dislike banks. If hon. Members do not believe me, they should consider how many families put their savings in a building society. Building societies are open when people are out shopping. When people are off work, the banks are shut. They cannot go in and argue. They can use cashpoints if there are any and they are working, but they might be miles away.

I ask the Paymaster General to think again and to exercise his office.

Mr. Holt: Throughout the Committee stage, I have been fairly consistent in my inconsistency with my own side. When I talk to people, I discover that they find the House of Commons a strange place. They consider that it is noisy, that people do not debate properly, that items are introduced for discussion but that hon. Members go off at a tangent. I therefore thought that I would find out what the Opposition had done on this matter. They have learnt from their lesson upstairs. An amendment which we debated in Committee proposed that all wages and salaries should be paid in money. The Opposition have obviously listened and learnt as they have now brought forward a much more reasonable amendment.

Ms. Clare Short: The point of that amendment was about the Truck Acts and whether people are paid in kind. It was not about cash. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that there were other amendments.

Mr. Holt: I am sorry that I have to withdraw the credit that I was giving the Opposition.

It is easy to pass legislation that is favoured by a small number of large firms and which will have a direct bearing on the daily lives of many people. Payment in cash is intrinsic to English working life, and has been for as long as I can remember. It is not unreasonable to suggest that it should continue unless people consent to change. To lose that right as a result of arbitrary Government action is not very good.

I understand the Government's argument that we are in the technical age of the computer and that everything can be done differently, but being paid in cash is desperately important to many people. I fear that, if everybody is paid by bank credit transfer, overdrafts will become the norm rather than a rarity and that many people will get themselves into debts which they will never be able to get out of. By abolishing the worker's right to be paid in cash, the Government are abolishing the discipline that the worker imposes on himself because he knows that he cannot spend more than the cash in the pay packet.

7.45 pm

When customers come into one of my establishments, they pay in cash. My staff are frequently asked for a little credit, but they know that they will be fired if they give it. Amazingly enough, the cash always turns up. The Government would do well to heed the new clause. It does not preclude a shift from cash payment by consent. That element of consent should be considered closely, as it is not unknown for trade unions to negotiate such a right away, although the worker may not agree with it and might be disadvantaged as a result.

Mistakes in pay packets have been mentioned. If pay is short, the employee quickly knows and nips down to the wages office to get it rectified. If there is an overpayment which is discovered but not declared, the employee is guilty of theft and can be taken to court. It might not be so easy to assess whether the pay is right from a computer printout, but an employee who inadvertently keeps £22 when he is entitled to only £21 is still guilty of theft. The Bill could lead more people into that trap. The change has not been asked for—indeed, many people say that they do not want it—and it is unnecessary. Only a few people want it.

The Government have impaled themselves on trying to do something unnecessary by imposition when it could have been done by persuasion. I am sure that most people could eventually be persuaded that it is not unreasonable to be paid in a form other than cash. It is unnecessarily harsh, however, to take the right away by law. That is especially true for the people in the north of England, such as my constituents, who are used to cash and unused to computer printouts. Perhaps the two systems could run in parallel for a while. But to enshrine it in law that an employer—against the wishes of all his employees, or a majority, or even a significant minority, of them—can remove their rights will do the Government's reputation no good.

Mr. Pendry: The Government are the only people to be out of step on this measure. The Minister visited ICI Gillingham and assumed that ICI Blackley and everyone else took a similar view, but almost everyone is against the measure. My right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) made the point with which I wished to begin. We have been told for years that the Conservative party is the party of choice. The new clause follows that principle. The Opposition are giving the people the opportunity to choose.

Some of my colleagues may not agree with me, but I believe that people should be paid by cheque. That is common sense. I have done exactly what the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) said, although I did not remove the rights of my trade union members. When I was a union official, I negotiated many agreements whereby workers were paid by cheque. It was always done by consent, because it was a democratic decision. We always negotiated agreements whereby the workers got something in return for giving away that right. Some did not wish to do it, and their rights were observed.

The Conservative party seems to have lost its connection with the rural worker. Two examples taken at random—Ryedale and West Derbyshire—show that the Government are out of touch with the circumstances of the rural worker. He does not have a banking network and, because of the Conservative policy of closing rural post offices, he often must travel miles to the nearest post office.

We must live in the practical world, about which we hear from only one Conservative Member—the hon. Member for Langbaurgh. Although we do not always agree with him, and he does not always follow his comments by voting in our Lobby, from time to time he talks practical common sense. That is what my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) meant when he talked about citizens advice bureaux being at the sharp end. Those are practical examples of what happens in our society.

Although I agree that, for safety and many other reasons, people should be paid by cheque, it should be done by negotiation and with consent. That is what the new clause says, and I am surprised that the Conservative party does not wish to be associated with its spirit.

Mr. Nellist: The Truck Acts, which the new clause would in part retain, give workers the right to be paid in cash. The Paymaster General recently described that method of payment as archaic and anachronistic. He meant that protection is not needed in his perception of modern-day Britain.

Most of the people who will be affected if the Bill is passed unamended will be lower-paid workers. They have the most to lose from such a transfer. All the costs of shifting from cash pay to bank transfer, and from weekly to monthly payments, will be borne by the workers, and all the benefits will be gained by the employers. It has been estimated that, especially in large companies, when the transfer to a banking system rather than a cash system is run through the Bankers' Automated Clearing Services Ltd—the chairman of the Conservative party has put the benchmark on that—every change would cut costs by £30 a person per year. In Committee, we heard some examples from Sheffield city council and British Telecom, which estimated savings of £31 and £35 per person respectively.

That will not be a one-off saving to the company, but an accrued saving every year. When the change from cash to bank payment is coupled with the change from weekly to monthly payment, especially in large companies, employers will effectively borrow workers' wages for four

weeks, and leave it in their bank accounts to attract interest before paying it to the workers who have earned it. If workers are paid in arrears, the problem becomes worse.

I disagree with some of my comrades about the position of banks. I have just discovered that 7 million workers are paid in cash and that only half of them have bank accounts. The high street banks, considering the prospect of 3·5 million new accounts, must welcome this legislation because of the extra profits that those accounts would generate.

Ms. Clare Short: The briefing from the banking information service states that banks have not pressed for the repeal of the Truck Acts. They said in previous documents that they did not want customers by compulsion. That is their position on the record.

Mr. Nellist: I accept that they say that they do not want customers by compulsion, but, faced with the possibility of 3·5 million new customers, they must welcome the legislation.

The clause would create many disbenefits and difficulties for workers. In Committee, we were told that there would be fewer muggings and robberies and more security, but cash can be stolen only once. A cash card or cheque book, once stolen, can be used many times. I question whether there would be more security for workers. We have heard about the difficulty of access to banks, especially in rural areas, the difficulty of opening a bank account, the fact that those aged under 18 would not normally be given cheque guarantee cards, the difficulties of workers with literacy and language problems and the danger of delays in cheques being transferred into the bank.

A law centre brought to my attention the case of a worker paid by bank transfer who had an overdraft. The money coming from his firm was poured down the black hole of the overdraft and he had no money on which to live. He was not entitled to supplementary benefit because he was receiving a wage, so he had to rely on charity handouts to buy food for his family.

The movement from weekly to monthly pay would pose many problems for workers in bridging the gap between surviving on weekly pay and having to wait perhaps two or three weeks before the cycle of monthly pay comes round. On bank charges, the Minister said in Committee that almost every bank operates free banking. That is often true only if an account is in credit—in some cases in credit by £100. For many workers, £100 is two weeks' wages. It may not be much to Tory Members on hundreds of thousands of pounds a year. Hon. Members smile. The hon. Member for Brighton and Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) and his brother and father net £160,000 a week from their ownership of the grocery chain Sainsburys. They can keep their bank accounts in £100 credit and not incur bank charges. It is rather different for those who work for such a grocery chain and who are paid only £50 a week.

I do not have enough time to read out a letter from a full-time official of the Transport and General Workers Union in Coventry detailing the problems in the factories in Coventry, especially for the workers on piecework. Earlier, I said that if a mistake is made in a weekly wage packet, the worker can run to the wages office and get a payment on the Thursday or Friday afternoon to compensate. If he is paid monthly, he will have to wait for at least a month to have the mistake rectified. In the factories in Coventry, and no doubt in the few manufacturing centres that are left after seven years of Tory Government, some workers still carry out piecework or work on bonus schemes. The variations in their wages, which are calculated in the wages office, could cause problems on a monthly basis.

Time does not permit me to raise points about the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers and the difficulties which its women workers in rural areas are experiencing. They cannot shop on a Friday night because, by the time they finish work, the banks and building societies are shut. I received a letter from the district secretary of the Tailors and Garment Workers in Belfast informing me that the banks shut between 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm in the city. How are workers supposed to go out during their lunch break and collect money from a bank, if the legislation is passed? But I cannot cover all those details in my short speech tonight.

8 pm

Many workers have negotiated the right to transfer to a monthly or bank transfer. Coventry city health authority made a once-and-for-all £30 payment to workers for that. In Leicester, Marconi increased the status of manual workers to staff status. In Southwark, that meant that staff were entitled to London weighting worth £6.20 a week. Leeds council provided more holidays. In those cases trade unions, having discussed the matter and probably having balloted their members, negotiated a transfer of payments.

If this provision is unamended by new clause 10, it will remove that choice from working people, and at the end of the day many workers will be out of pocket. I hope that all my comrades will support the new clause and that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), who spent three months in Committee parading his conscience before us, as he has done tonight, and then sat on his hands and registered a No vote, will also support the new clause tonight and put his money where his mouth is.

Mr. Caborn: I wish to raise two important points which have been omitted from the debate.

I have received serious representations from ethnic minorities, including the Sheffield Asian Welfare Association. They say that they will face new difficulties if cashless pay is agreed to. Because of the Government's attitude toward immigrants, they are afraid, and have great difficulty registering with an authority. If the Government are not prepared to accept the new clause, and if cashless pay is agreed to, it will have a major effect on our ethnic minorities. Therefore, I ask the Government seriously to consider accepting new clause 10. It is reasonable.

People who have been dealing with the trade union side of industry have agreed that we would all like to move toward cashless pay, but without being forced to do so. I hope that the Government will take that advice from industry. The Minister has been able to mention only one company which is in favour of this proposal—ICI. Even the CBI is against it. I suggest that the Minister should bear that in mind when he replies.

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman has raised one matter which has not so far been mentioned, and I hope that the Paymaster-General will deal with it when he replies. In talking about ethnic minorities and the abolition of the Truck Acts, we are talking about payment in the coin of the realm. There is a possibility that ethnic employers will pay in ethnic money which can then be exchanged only at

[Mr. Holt]

ethnic shops and through ethnic banks. It will not be against the law for employers to pay in that way. The Government are opening that door by abolishing the Truck Acts without concerning themselves with the coin of the realm.

Mr. Caborn: I had not taken that point on board, and the Minister should consider it when he replies.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I have never before had the pleasure of listening to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) speak from the Opposition Front Bench. It may be that this is his first time, and I congratulate him on that. I should like to have begun by replying to him on a new clause or amendment which I could accept on behalf of the Government, but I am afraid that in urging this new clause he is on a somewhat ill-conceived mission.

Several hon. Members have mentioned that this part of the Bill repeals a provision which was first introduced by the Truck Act 1831. In a speech during the last debate, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) was a little critical of my, apparently, scornful views of the legislation, and the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) reminded me that I had described the legislation on Second Reading as archaic. Like any good Conservative, I treat old legislation with suitable veneration, and the fact that the first Truck Act was passed in 1831 is, in itself, not a reason for repealing it.

The description of the Truck Acts given today, confirms my impression that the trade union and labour movement is extremely old-fashioned and backward-looking. Its veneration for a slowly vanishing society can sometimes be taken to extremes. I shall illustrate that first by reminding the House of the basis of the Truck Act 1831, which remains the basis of the present law until this Bill repeals it.

As many hon. Members will know from their modern history lessons in school, the origins of the Truck Act go back to the pernicious system that sprang up in the early 19th century when some labourers began to be paid in truck instead of in cash. It usually took the form of tokens, which could be cashed only at a company shop, and, obviously, the company could dictate the price of the goods exchanged for the tokens. That is the basis of the legislation, and it has dictated the form of legislation which has come down to us 150 years later. The provision about which hon. Members have been speaking provides that manual workers have the right to insist on payment in cash.

All hon. Members will appreciate that a great deal has happened since 1831.

Ms. Short: So that no one is misled, may I tell the House that the most recent relevant legislation is the Payment of Wages Act 1960?

Mr. Clarke: That was when the measure was last consolidated. The right of manual workers to be paid in cash has come indirectly through various subsequent provisions from the Truck Act 1831.

A great deal has changed since then. First, the business of paying in truck has ceased to be a social problem. Secondly, we no longer make the distinction between manual and non-manual workers for most pay purpóses. In both cases we expect the important aspects of pay and remuneration to be decided by agreement and discussion and, where necessary, by contract. There is no distinction between the way in which manual and non-manual workers arrive at agreements over important matters, such as rates of pay, bonuses, overtime rates and holiday entitlement. The law is the same for both manual and non-manual workers, except that manual workers have the right to insist on being paid in cash. That has meant that some employers and trade unions have found that where there is a desire to consider non-cash payment for manual workers, a handful of people, who insist on their legal rights to be paid in cash, can hold up and prevent the whole transition.

For non-manual work we have seen all sorts of non-cash payments which are fringe benefits and much coveted by others, such as company cars. It would be illegal to give them to manual workers because it would be in breach of the Truck Acts, which are being so passionately defended. On the other hand, a manual worker can insist on payment in cash.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: Both the hon. Members for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) and for Blackley appear to imagine that they are talking about the low paid. The law which they are defending has nothing to do with the low paid. Many low-paid workers are not protected by the Truck Acts and are exposed to this misery and hold this great grievance.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will in a second.

This provision, which is being defended so eloquently, is of benefit only to manual workers—the labourers of 19th century England who had its protection. Shop assistants are not protected by it.

Ms. Short: They are.

Mr. Clarke: Shop workers are not.

Ms. Short: Yes, they are.

Mr. Clarke: I am open to correction, and if the hon Lady has found an authority, obviously I shall look at it. I understand that the whole provision depends on the definition of manual and non-manual workers. Clerical workers or shop assistants are not protected — *[Interruption.]*. There are plenty of low-paid non-manual workers who are not protected by the Truck Acts. No non-manual worker has ever lobbied me to extend the benefits of the Truck Acts in order to protect him from the fearful exploitation to which Opposition Members believe that he will be exposed.

Ms. Clare Short: I refer the right hon. and learned Gentleman to the Library briefing. That says that in 1896 shop assistants were brought within the protection offered by the Acts.

Mr. Clarke: Perhaps I could see the Library briefing, as I am not sure that the hon. Lady is very certain of her facts. But if she is right, I shall accept that correction. I have not looked up the authorities, but I should be surprised if shop assistants were included in the definition of manual workers to be paid in truck.

Ms. Clare Short: I shall give the Minister the briefing.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way now, while he is reading the briefing?

Mr. Clarke: I see that shop workers are included for the purposes of deductions for fines, damaged goods, materials or services. The right to be paid in cash does not extend to shop workers. It extends to manual workers. A well-paid manual worker digging a ditch and earning £150 to £200 a week—and plenty of manual workers are paid that much—is covered by the Truck Acts. However, a shop assistant or clerical worker—I am on very sound ground when it comes to clerical workers—who is paid £40 or £50 a week is not protected by the legislation.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: A low-paid clerical worker has never come to me demanding the protection of the Truck Acts.

Mr. Oakes: Will the Minister address himself to the new clause, which says:

"No worker who is currently paid in cash shall cease to be so paid without his or her consent."

We are not asking for the repeal of clause 11. The new clause refers to "any worker".

Mr. Clarke: I shall come to that point. The Government take the view that this provision, which is designed to stop labourers being paid in tokens, is perhaps not the most pressing cause at present. However, it is undesirable that a handful of people should be able to stop a change towards a more cash-free society. We propose repeal. But the Opposition think that in 1831 the provisions did not go far enough. They think that in today's social conditions any workers who are now paid in cash should be protected in law. They are moving in a direction that is a little out of touch when it comes to legal reform.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way to an hon. Gentleman who, I am quite convinced, is out of tune with the times on a wide number of social and political matters.

Mr. Nellist: Saying that the 1831 Act has no validity ought to stick in the craw of a Government who are supposed to be taking us back to Victorian values. The Minister accused us of talking about the Act as if it applied only to low-paid workers. Of course it applies to manual workers on £150 or £200 a week. But if they were given the choice, those workers might well go over to cashless pay, because they would not have to worry about keeping £100 in their bank accounts to avoid bank charges. They might even have cars, so they would not have to rely on the poor bus services in rural areas to reach a bank, building society or post office when it is open. The low-paid will be hurt most if they lose the right to be paid in cash, because they will, by definition, have the most problems if this Bill is enacted.

8.15 pm

Mr. Clarke: In defending part of the Truck Acts, the hon. Gentleman is not defending Victorian values, because we are talking about pre-Victorian legislation. The provisions that he so passionately defends were almost out of date before the great Queen died. It has taken us a long time to get round to repealing them. It has been frequently said that employers and employees do not want this change. But if nobody wants it, there will not be any change. Nothing in the Bill obliges an employer or employee to stop cash payments if that is what he prefers.

Opposition Members may have noticed that an increasing number of people have bank accounts. The banks are beginning to reverse their appallingly anti-consumer behaviour of a few years ago and are opening once more on Saturdays. There are also automatic paying-out services. More and more people have building society accounts. People are also paid in Giro, and we are moving towards a more cashless society.

We propose to repeal the legislation because the bulk of employees might be quite content to go over to non-cash payments—and good luck to them if they can negotiate some share of the savings—but it would need only a handful of people in the company to say that they are protected by the Truck Acts and that they will not agree to being paid in a different way, for that change to prove impossible. We have heard some amazing hyperbole and tales of agony and grief. If we repeal this provision, we shall move towards being a cashless society in line with other modern societies that we should consider to be our rough equivalent.

The proportion of payments made by cash in this country compared with the proportion made by cash in other countries is relevant. In Britain, 39 per cent. of wage payments are made in cash. In America 1 per cent. of wage payments are made in cash. In the Federal Republic of Germany 5 per cent. are paid in cash. The Truck Acts have stopped that drift towards a cashless society.

There are two advantages to making it much easier for the bulk of the population and their employers to move into the late 20th century and further towards a cashless society. First, it is much more efficient and less costly. Substantial savings can be made per employee. That is why various bodies such as local authorities as well as many private sector employers are anxious to move to cash-free payments. If substantial sums can be saved——

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): What about collective bargaining?

Mr. Clarke: Collective bargaining cannot waive legal rights. If neither the employer nor the employee is interested in non-cash payments, I assume that they will not be made. But if a trade union wanted to negotiate changing to non-cash payments and had the support of the employees—perhaps there is some deal that will share out the savings — it would need only a couple of employees to say, "Blow that. We shall insist on our legal rights under the Truck Acts," for that process to be brought to a halt, unless our Bill is enacted and the Truck Acts are repealed. Unions cannot negotiate away the legal rights of their members.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) is defending archaic law. In this country there is a high proportion of wage payments in cash, which means that costs are imposed on industry. In many industries, both the employer and the employee are deprived of the chance to participate in the savings that can be made from going over to a cashless system of payment.

A cashless system of payment would also reduce the opportunities for crime. I spoke about that on Second Reading, so I shall not dilate about it again. In this country, wage snatches are a profitable form of criminal activity. Very large sums of cash are moved about in order

[Mr. Clarke]

to pay people under our old-fashioned system, and that means a high security risk. In 1984, there were almost 450 armed robberies at factories and offices or on the public highway. Many of them were wages snatches. It is a totally unnecessary credit risk to have security lorries stuffed full of banknotes going in and out of factories every week because we are such a traditional society that we have not got round to repealing the legislation.

Savings can be made, and there are obvious implications for crime prevention. The Bill would enable us to make social changes, in line with more modern societies, which most people would regard as perfectly predictable in today's age. I am told that people do not have bank accounts, that they cannot open them, or that they are costly. But the position is steadily changing. I am told that 75 per cent. of adults have bank accounts. Almost 90 per cent. have accounts at some deposit-taking institution.

There are more credit cards, and more people are accustomed to taking advantage of automated banking facilities.

Ms. Clare Short: What about stolen credit cards?

Mr. Clarke: When the hon. Lady replies, she will obviously launch into an attack on the whole concept of the banking society. She feels that credit cards and cheque books worry hon. Members. I can only assume that the hon. Members who have spoken in the debate and the hon. Lady, who is about to do so, keep their savings in an old sock at the bottom of their bed and pay their bills in pound coins. The fact is that three quarters of the adult population have a bank account. We are plainly moving towards a society in which less cash will be used and more convenient non-cash transactions will take place. There are small, vulnerable groups which for years have been accustomed to taking payments in forms other than cash.

I conclude on what I regard as a telling point. The Opposition's claims about the low-paid employed presumably do not apply to the unemployed. For years, the unemployed have not been paid the unemployment benefit by cash. They have been paid by Giro. All social security benefits are paid by Giro. I am astonished that the Opposition have not thrown in that all-embracing clause, that march back to the great days of William IV of 1831, and the equivalent legal protection for the unemployed and those who receive social security benefits. The Opposition have not thought through their proposal.

An extraordinary and impassioned debate has been aroused around a quite insignificant repeal provision. The Opposition's new clause would have the preposterous effect of extending a legal protection, which became outmoded a century or more ago, to many people to whom it does not apply at the moment.

Ms. Clare Short: The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment insulted low-paid workers by pretending that the Bill which will damage them so severely is about giving them cards. That was not funny. We are talking about workers who run out of money at the end of every week. Each week, they must decide whether to spend their money on food for their children or on clothes that they might need. Too many people live like that. The Minister insulted the unemployed when he talked as though they do not have plenty of time to go to a post office or a bank to get their money. That is just whey they do have—too little to do, and too little money. To say that we are holding back the low paid from the conditions enjoyed by the unemployed is a joke and insensitive.

Neither the Labour party nor the British people are opposed to cashless pay. In fact, in the recent past, there has been a massive shift towards cashless pay by negotiation, agreement and freedom of choice. In 1969, 75 per cent. of all employees were paid in cash. Now, the figure is below 40 per cent.

We are in favour of massive progress by agreement, consent and free choice. Our new clause and amendment say that those who are currently paid in cash shall continue to be paid in cash unless they give their consent to a change. We advocate freedom of choice to people, and not legislation that forces them into something that they do not want.

The repeal of the Truck Acts is not required to introduce cashless pay. The Central Policy Review Staff, the old think tank, said in its study that it was not a major barrier. The movement has been going on, in any event. The repeal of the Truck Acts means that people can be forced into such a position in an inconvenient way, without sharing the benefits of the savings to employers. Until now, employers who have moved in that respect have had to negotiate. They have known of the benefits to themselves from such a change. They have told workers, "We shall give you part of the benefit. We are moving to monthly pay. We shall help you in the process of change." None of that will be necessary now. It can, and indeed will, be forced on workers whether they like it or not.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has already received a complaint from shop workers who have been told that, with the legislation, they will be moved on to cashless and monthly pay. Those shop workers are women on low pay. They are worried because, after finishing work, they spend their money on shopping for their families.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I intervene because the hon. Lady is being carried away, again, into error. The legislation and the Opposition's new clause have nothing to do with changes to monthly pay. As to a change being made without agreement, if it is a term of the contract of employment, nothing in the legislation enables an employer to overturn, unilaterally, the contract of employment. The example cited by the hon. Lady was miles wide of the mark with respect to the effect of the Bill or the new clause.

Ms. Short: The Minister is wrong. In practice, in the real world, the shifts to cashless and monthly pay go together.

Mr. Martin *rose*——

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn) *rose*——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Ms. Short: I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Short: No, I gave way to the right hon. and learned Gentleman just now.

Mr. Straw: The Minister said that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) was in

error. I corroborate everything she said about what is happening in Blackburn. The information came from me. I am certain about it. Whatever the Minister says about a particular national firm—I shall not name it because the employees fear for their jobs—*[Interruption.]* Oh, yes. The Minister knows about unemployment in Blackburn. The company is moving towards cashless pay only because of the legislation and the fear that it can generate in the minds of workers.

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend reinforces the point——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Ms. Short: I shall not give way. We are under pressure. The Minister spoke for some time.

It is inconvenient for some workers to be paid in a non-cash form. Women who earn a small amount, who perhaps work part-time, like to get their money and go out shopping. They find it inconvenient to receive cashless pay because they must go to a bank to withdraw the money.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Ms. Short: I shall give way before I am finished, but not yet. I understand that the Truck Acts extend to shop workers. I understand that the Under-Secretary of State has looked up the legislation. The Minister and I shall have to look it up in detail. There is a general understanding that shop workers are covered by the protection of the legislation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Lady is wrong.

Ms. Short: I am not wrong. I do not know why the Paymaster General seeks to heckle. I think that it is because his case is so bad. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The Minister should set an example to hon. Members. He is not the only one who heckles from a sedentary position, but he is the last person who should do so.

Ms. Short: The Opposition do not care about what is happening in the United States of America in the way that Government Members passionately do. We care about what is in the interests of workers in Britain. We want those workers to have freedom of choice. We want those workers who are currently paid in cash to continue to be paid in cash or to negotiate agreements that suit themselves.

Mr. Martin *rose*——

Ms. Short: I must finish or my Whip will strangle me.

The Opposition are in favour of freedom of choice. The Government are taking from low-paid workers the right to be paid in cash if that suits their convenience.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Lady said that she would give way to me before she resumed her seat. I am not talking about the facts of the Blackburn case. I point out to her that the law to which she referred applies to manual workers' rights to be paid in cash. She is not talking about the real world. She is talking about the 1831 law. The debate has nothing to do with weekly or monthly payments and part-time women workers, because hardly any of them are manual workers. It has nothing to do with the low-paid, because it protects some low-paid workers and not others. Does the hon. Lady concede that she has actually got the legislation to which she referred fairly thoroughly around her neck?

Ms. Short: The Minister protests too much and knows too little. There are many female part-time manual workers in my constituency. They live in poverty. They need their money in cash. That is their preference. The Opposition believe in their freedom of choice. The Paymaster General does not.

Question put, That the clause be read a second time:-

The House divided: Ayes 165, Noes 248.

Division No. 179] **[8.29 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*

Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Freud, Clement
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Michael
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, John
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Penhaligon, David
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived

Clause 1

GENERAL RESTRICTIONS ON DEDUCTIONS MADE, OR PAYMENTS RECEIVED, BY EMPLOYERS

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'of his' and insert 'employed by him'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient also to consider Government amendments Nos. 6, 48, 49, and 51.

Mr. Trippier: These amendments change the phrase "worker of his" to "worker employed by him" wherever it occurs in the Bill, and make changes consequent on such rewording. They reflect concern which was expressed by the opposition in Committee about the infelicitous, although unintended, inference which could be drawn from the original wording.

The point—eloquently put at the second sitting of the Committee by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo)—is that "worker of his" could be taken to imply ownership, reducing the worker to the same status, I recall him saying, as a machine tool or workbench, something that is the property of the employer. "Worker employed by him" avoids any such implications of ownership.

Ms. Clare Short: My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo), who moved the original amendment in Committee, cannot be here now. I am sure that he would be pleased at his symbolic victory. It is a pity we could not win more real changes in the Bill. None the less, for the Government to bring forward in 1986 a Bill which talks about workers belonging to their employers shows something about their attitude. My hon. Friend's efforts have amended the Bill in a desirable direction.

Amendment agreed to

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 12, leave out 'term' and insert 'provision'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient also to consider the following: Government amendments Nos. 7 and 8.

Amendment No. 9, in page 2, line 7, leave out 'shown' and insert 'given'.

Government amendments Nos. 10, 11, 12 and 17.

Mr. Trippier: This is my attempt to be fair and reasonable, despite the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) has just said. These amendments have been tabled in response to an undertaking that I gave, which I think is referred to in column 65 of the report of second sitting of the Committee.

On that occasion I undertook to consider a proposal put forward by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar that the written term which sets out the circumstances in which a deduction from wages may be made should be given rather than shown to the worker.

I think that Opposition Members will agree that these amendments achieve this intention. Their effect is that, where the employer relies on a written term of the contract to authorise a deduction he must, in advance of the deduction, give the worker a copy of the term authorising the deduction or give him an explanation of the term. Indeed, the amendments go further by providing that, where the employer has to rely on two or more terms, a copy of each of these terms must be given to the worker or the combined effect of such terms must be explained to the worker.

These amendments improve the Bill and give added protection to the worker against unlawful deductions from wages. I commend the amendments to the House.

8.45 pm

Mr. Nellist: I remember taking part in that debate in Committee. I ask the Minister the same question now as I asked then. He has made a halfway house attempt with this set of amendments. Why, given the Government's view that a contract of employment is a quasi-legal document which is solemn and binding, is he not prepared to introduce Government amendments which say that the question of deductions and so on should be in a document signed by the worker and the employer to show that both agree to its provisions?

Mr. Trippier: When we are talking about a contract of employment, as we discussed in Committee at some length, it does not have to be a written contract. With this legislation we have insisted that at least there should be a written term of a contract which makes it clear that there is a power to deduct. A written term has to be handed to the worker and there must be proof that that has taken place. I think that the hon. Gentleman should be satisfied. Amendment No. 9, tabled in the name of the Opposition, will have a similar effect to the amendment I am moving. I hope that, under the circumstances, the Opposition will feel it necessary to withdraw that amendment.

Ms. Clare Short: This again is a small but welcome amendment. Under the Bill as drafted it would have been possible for an employer to make a deduction simply having waved a piece of paper under the nose of a worker and only showing the written terms of the contract to the worker and not having to give a copy to the worker. That is rectified by the amendment. The amendment is a concession—only a small one but it is something—that the Government have been forced by the Opposition to make. We are grateful for that and, of course, we shall withdraw amendment No. 9.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That does not arise on the question before the House. We shall deal with that, if necessary, when we come to it.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Caborn: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 1, line 15, at end insert—

'(c) the employer makes the deduction within 12 months of the discovery of the act or omission complained of'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient also to consider Government amendments Nos. 26, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 38, 39, 41 and 42.

Mr. Caborn: In Committee we argued forcefully about the position of an employer being effectively handed an open cheque in being able to make deductions from a worker going back any length of time that the employer could find to be justified. We thought that that was wrong and, to a large extent, against the natural trend of British justice. Timetables are laid down, and we thought that that was extremely important for the Bill. We did not believe that it was right that an employer could tell an employee that he had committed an act of theft or whatever five years previously and that that was now to be brought against him.

It is evident that the force of argument put by my hon. Friends in Committee has sunk in with the Government because in amendment No. 26, the Government, to a large extent, accept our points. However, their amendment is to a different part of the Bill—clause 2. That is welcome. My hon. Friends' arguments were put forcefully and in a

[Mr. Caborn]

common-sense way. They were born out of their knowledge of industry. The Paymaster General's performance showed that he does not even know who is covered by the Truck Acts. That shows a certain amount of misunderstanding at best and total illiteracy at worst.

Therefore——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose——*

Mr. Caborn: The right hon. and learned Gentleman will have plenty of time to have a go.

Therefore, I hope that the Government will concur with what I have been saying about our amendment. Their amendment No. 26 shows that they agree with its purpose.

Mr. Trippier: I was waiting to hear the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) say that he was prepared to withdraw his amendment, because I am about to try to convince the House that the amendments tabled in the Government's name meet his point.

This group of amendments comprise 10 Government amendments and one Opposition amendment. They are all concerned with the same point. We have tabled our amendments because of the commitment that I gave in Committee that we would consider whether an amendment was required to ensure that deductions related to cash shortages or stock deficiencies would be entirely prohibited if there was unreasonable delay between the date the cash shortage or stock deficiency occurred and the date the employer made a deduction from wages in respect of that shortage or deficiency. Having considered the matter in a fair and reasonable light, I believe that something specific is required in the Bill, and I am happy to support the amendments, which I am sure will meet the concern expressed by Opposition Members.

The amendments will mean that, in order to make a lawful deduction on account of a cash shortage or stock deficiency, an employer will have to make the deduction no later than 12 months after either the date on which he established the existence of the shortage or deficiency in respect of which the deduction is made or, if earlier, the date when he ought reasonably to have established its existence. In layman's terms, that means that a deduction will be lawful if the employer makes the deduction within 12 months of finding out about a shortage unless he could reasonably be expected to find out about it earlier, in which case the deduction would be lawful only if he made it within 12 months of the date on which he ought to have found out about the existence of the shortage.

That will prevent employers—I am sure that they are few in number—who decide to victimise a worker, for whatever reason, dredging up a lot of old events on which they took no action at the time and eventually starting to make deductions in the distant future. That was the point that I accepted in Committee. I thought that that was immoral. In addition, the provision will help to prevent disputes over events that happened so far back in the past that memories have become blurred about what actually took place, and to avoid resultant injustices — for example, the wrong worker suffering a deduction or shortage.

I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that the amendments are an improvement to the Bill. I commend them to the House and ask the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central to withdraw his amendment because ours meets his point.

Ms. Clare Short: This is another series of concessions achieved by the Opposition, and they are of some significance. Under the Bill as drafted, an employer was given the power to go back as long as he wished—10 or 20 years — to find any shortage or damage and act against the worker by making deductions or fines. We said that two people might work together in a friendly way but then fall out, and it might lead to the employer seeking to victimise the worker, going back over many years, claiming that there had been stock shortages and then claiming massive deductions from the worker.

The imbalance in the Government's perspective was clear in the unamended Bill, in that the employer was given the right to go back timelessly, but any employee who intended to go to a tribunal to complain that he had had an illegal deduction had to act within three months or lose his legal right. In this group of amendments, the Government have conceded both points. The employer is limited in that he can go back only 11 months and the workers can take their case to a tribunal within a period that a tribunal judges reasonable. I think that that is a correct understanding of the Government's amendments. Therefore, the three-month time limit is gone.

The Bill is still highly unacceptable, but at least the Opposition have gained improved protection for workers, little as it might be. I imagine that in the circumstances, my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) will be willing to withdraw our amendment, although it is notable that the Opposition amendment takes up only two lines but the Government found it necessary to have 10 lines to achieve the same objective.

Mr. Caborn: I thought that the Government might accept our amendment, based on what my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) has said — that ours is much shorter and will take up less space and paper. Obviously, that is not so. When one sees a ray of common sense from the Government, one has to grasp it with both hands. On that basis, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 6, in page 2, line 2 leave out 'of his' and insert 'employed by him'.

No. 7, in page 2, line 4 leave out 'term' and insert 'provision'.

No. 8 in page 2, line 5 leave out from 'contact', to 'on' in line 7 and insert

'means any provision of the contract comprised—

(a) in one or more written terms of the contract of which the employer has given the worker a copy".

No. 10, in page 2, line 12 leave out

'any other express or implied term of the contract'

and insert

'in one or more terms of the contract (whether express or implied and, if express, whether oral or in writing)'.

No. 11, in page 2, line 13 after 'effect', insert

', or (as the case may be) combined effect,'.

No. 12, in page 2, line 17 leave out 'term' and insert 'provision'.—*[Mr. Trippier.]*

Ms. Clare Short: I beg to move Amendment No. 13, in page 2, line 17 leave out from 'contract' to 'or' in line 18.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 14, in page 2, line 23, leave out

'the variation took effect or (as the case may be)'.

Ms. Short: The purpose of the amendment is to check that the Bill means what the Minister claimed in Committee. We were concerned that under the Bill it would be impossible for an employer to produce a version of the contract—we have to be clear that an implied term of a contract can justify a fine or deduction—wave it in front of an employee's nose and then say that he was therefore making a deduction that was allowed under the contract. The Minister assured us that that was not possible. He told us that under the Bill it was absolutely necessary that the terms of the contract were clear and shown to the worker before the act or omission complained of led to the deduction or fine. Indeed, the Minister spoke in quite strong language. He said that it would be immoral if it were otherwise. I am sure that what he said was sincere and that that was his honest reading of the Bill.

I do not claim to be right on this matter, although we think we are right on shop assistants. It is notable that the Paymaster General got that wrong as well as so many things in the Bill, but I am sure we shall come back to that.

Let us look at clause 1(4). The protection that the Minister relied on in his arguments in Committee seems to apply only to a variation in the term of a contract, not to the provisions of the original contract. The amendment will change subsection (4) to read:

"For the purposes of this section—

(a) Any relevant term of a worker's contract or

(b) any agreement or consent signified by a worker as mentioned in subsection (1)*(b)*, shall not operate to authorise the making of any deduction, or the receipt of any payment, on account of any conduct of the worker, or any event occurring, before the agreement or consent was signified."

I hope that the Minister will respond fully to this point.

The Bill as drafted does not guarantee the position that the Minister said would be the correct one. The amendments are necessary to bring the Bill into line with the undertakings that he gave. That is the purpose of the amendments and we will be interested to hear the Minister's response.

Mr. Trippier: It might be helpful to the House if I tried to explain, in speaking to these amendments, exactly what subsection (4) of clause 1 achieves. The previous subsections established that a deduction from pay may be lawful if it is provided for in the contract of employment, with any provision that provides for a deduction being given or explained in writing to the worker to ensure compliance with subsection (3) before a deduction authorised by such provision is made.

We start from the position that both sides, employers and workers, know the rules about deductions and observe them. Subsection (4) means that, if a contract is changed so that an employer can thereafter make deductions if certain behaviour occurs, the employer is prevented from making deductions in respect of conduct that occurred before the change.

9 pm

We cannot provide that no change in a contract can ever be made. If we did that, contracts would be set in stone for all time. We can start, and we intend to start—this is the assurance that I gave the Committee—making changes retrospectively authorising deductions, and subsection (4) achieves that. I believe that that is sufficient protection.

Ms. Clare Short: I am carefully following the Minister's comments. However, my reading of paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* of subsection (3) leads me to believe that it would require the employer to show the written terms of the contract or any other express terms of the contract to the worker at any time before making a deduction. The Bill appears to state that. However, in Committee the Minister said that he considered that that would be immoral and that the terms of the contract must have been shown to the worker before the act or omission that led to the deduction. Perhaps the drafting could have been improved. That is the point I am trying to secure and I hope that the Minister can understand that. Paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)*, as drafted, do not secure that position.

Mr. Trippier: I can only repeat to the hon. Lady the assurance that I gave her in Committee. I have expressed my understanding of the matter and that is the legal interpretation of the Bill on the advice given to me by my Department's solicitors.

The Committee agreed with me that it was objectionable and wrong that an employer should spring a deduction on an employee at a moment's notice. For example, it would be unacceptable for an employer to decide on a Thursday evening—if wages were normally paid on a Friday — to hand a written term to the employee for an event that occurred weeks or even months before. I can assure the hon. Lady and the House that as subsection (4) is currently drafted, there is no way that we would allow retrospective authorised deductions. I believe that that will be sufficient protection.

The amendments appear to be designed to stop employers changing the contract. There is a difference of opinion between the Government and the Opposition on this point. Under the amendments, a deduction arising from a changed term would mean that a change could be made in the term without the written consent of the worker. That is not necessary, as a contract cannot be changed without the worker giving consent, even if that consent is only implied in the fact that the worker does not repudiate it. There is no extra protection in the amendments and no reason to put extra hurdles in the way of the parties if they agree to change the contract.

Ms. Clare Short: I have no alternative but to accept the Minister's assurances. However, I am baffled by the drafting of the Bill in that subsection (3)*(a)* provides:

"a written term of the contract which the employer has shown to the worker shall be on any occasion prior to the employer making the deduction in question"—

Mr. Trippier *rose*——

Ms. Clare Short: I should like to finish my point.

Subsection (4), which authorises a variation in the contract, states that such a variation

"shall not operate to authorise the making of any deduction, or the receipt of any payment, on account of any conduct of the worker, or any other event occurring, before the variation took effect".

It would seem that there is more protection in the case of a variation than in the other case. Therefore, the purpose of the amendment was to apply the protection that applies in the case of a variation to all contracts, not to make it impossible to make a variation. I do not think that we will settle this point tonight. I assume that the Minister and his advisers are correct, although I am not confident of that.

Mr. Trippier: I would like to reassure the hon. Lady. I am truly not being unfair to her. I have been down this track before. She raised the matter with me, quite rightly,

[Mr. Trippier]

on 25 February. I decided to consider it and said that I needed notice to study it in some detail. In Committee on 27 February my first words were:

"On a point of order, Sir Anthony. The Committee will recall that, on Tuesday, I gave an undertaking to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) to confirm that my interpretation of clause 1(4) was correct. I am happy to assure the Committee, and especially the hon. Lady, that subsection 1(4) ensures that an employer cannot, by any means, introduce a term allowing a deduction to be made for conduct after the incident has occurred."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee K*, 27 February 1986; c. 113.]

Ms. Short: Given the Minister's assurance, which I hope proves to be right in practice when interpreted by the courts, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I beg to move amendment No. 15, in page 2, line 26, leave out subsection (5).

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 50.

Mr. Clarke: The amendment gives me the opportunity to return to a small matter which is causing a little agitated debate between myself and the hon. Members for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn)—whether the main Truck Acts include shop workers in the definition of manual labourers.

I accept that a number of political issues could come between myself and the hon. Lady, and I am sure that she will agree that there are probably more substantial matters that we could argue about than the Truck Act of 1831 as applied by the Truck (Amendment) Act 1887.

But I understand now why there have been these vigorous exchanges between myself and Labour Members. They are relying, in exactly the same way as I would rely if I were in opposition, and as I used to rely, on a letter from the economic affairs section of the Library. I would normally have relied on that briefing and, as I know its author well, I would particularly have relied on her opinion. But those who advise me have shown me the references and I have looked them up for myself and I believe that on this rare occasion the advice from the Library is wrong.

The definition of manual worker in the main Truck Acts of 1831 was made clearer by the Truck (Amendment) Act 1887. That is explained in pages 1700 onwards of the second edition of Redgrave's "Health and Safety in Factories". There are a fascinating series of decisions about this legislation. The one relevant to shop assistants is Bound *v.* Lawrence, 1892, 1 Queen's Bench, 226. If anybody wants to know, bus conductors, bus drivers, railway guards and others are not protected by the Truck Acts, and shop workers and assistants could not rely upon the Acts that we are talking about.

On the other hand, when one moves to deductions, one finds that the Truck Act 1896 extends the protection on deductions and fines to shop workers as well as workmen. It was that change which led to the phrase in the letter from the Library and is relevant to these technical amendments which are designed to clarify the definition of the word "deduction" for the purpose of the Bill. I hope that they will be acceptable to the House, including the Opposition, because the principal purpose of deleting clause 1(5) and replacing it with the new subsections is to try to close a possible loophole that a less than scrupulous employer might try to use to evade the protection that we are giving in the Bill to those in the retail trade in relation to deductions.

Let me give brief illustrations of the problem and what we are doing by giving three examples of what might amount to a deduction from pay. First, an employer could disagree with a worker about how much pay is due to the worker. If the employer pays what in his opinion is due, and he has a genuine disagreement with his employee, who thinks that he is entitled to more, that is not a deduction for the purpose of the Bill. That is a dispute about the contractual entitlement to pay and that will be decided by the ordinary courts, not by the industrial tribunal. That is true under any definition in the Bill.

In the second case, the employer might pay the worker concerned less than his ordinary entitlement by taking out of the pay that he hands over some sort of fine or deduction, perhaps for disciplinary reasons or to cover a deficiency. That plainly is a deduction. We covered that in our first attempt to define a deduction and that is principally what this part of the Bill is about.

Thirdly, an employer may deliberately pay a worker less than he owes him and may do so merely for some general reason, perhaps because he simply does not wish to comply with his full contractual obligations.

As the Bill was originally drafted, there might have been room for doubt about whether that deliberate failure to pay amounted to a deduction. The amendments, which would put two new subsections into clause 8, provide that, when the employer pays a worker less than is properly payable, that will be a deduction, unless the reason is an error of computation concerning the amount of wages due.

I hope that I have been reasonably clear about two technical amendments which will clarify the meaning of "deduction" and close a potentially serious loophole through which some employers might have escaped.

Ms. Clare Short: There has been some interesting confusion about whether shop workers are covered by the Truck Acts. The Paymaster General was right when he suggested that we had relied on the briefing from the Library. Such briefings are normally second to none and I am not yet convinced that the Library is wrong in this case. We shall look into the matter, but I accept that it is possible that the Library is wrong and that is why we were misled.

However, it seems that the national multiple chain in Blackburn was misled in the same way as our Library, because it told its workers that they will have cashless pay imposed on them. It seems that that major company is under the same illusion—if it be an illusion—as the Library.

The Government's reasons for the amendment are not objectionable to the Opposition. Indeed, if the Paymaster General answers a question in the affirmative, we shall warmly welcome amendment No. 50. The amendment provides:

"Where the total amount of any wages that are paid on any occasion by an employer to any worker employed by him is less than the total amount of the wages that are properly payable by him to the worker"

and the underpayment is not due to an error of computation, it will count as a deduction.

If an employer is paying illegal wages under part II of the Bill, will he be caught? Does the amendment mean that

workers who are illegally underpaid will acquire the right to go to a tribunal and to take action immediately, without having to go through the wages inspectorate which never prosecutes? It seems to me that that might be the meaning of the amendment.

What are the wages that are "properly payable" to the worker? Are they the wages that are normally paid or are they the wages that are legally required? If an employer is making illegal underpayments, surely they are not wages that are "properly payable".

The amendment says that a deficiency shall be treated as a deduction

"for the purpose of this Part",

but I cannot see that that excludes my interpretation.

I am enormously interested in amendment No. 50. It could be an enormous change of heart by the Government, although I think that it is probably an accident. The Government may have stumbled into giving workers who have received illegal underpayments a remedy that would be easier than that currently available to them, given that there are too few wages inspectors and that the wages inspectorate is obsessed with being friendly with employers, does not collect adequate information on the needs of workers and has an absolute policy of not prosecuting on first offences. Perhaps my interpretation of the amendment is fanciful, but it seems to me to be a possible interpretation.

Mr. Martin: May I ask the Minister a few questions about a matter concerning which I have already asked various questions? I do not expect him to recall them because his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) answered them. It relates to an organisation that runs a Manpower Services Commission project, for which I understand the Paymaster General is ultimately responsible. A complaint about delay was made about that organisation. It was not the first time that such a complaint had been brought to my attention. It was that the sponsors of the project, who were therefore acting on behalf of the Government, had delayed paying the bus fares of those who were on MSC projects.

9.15 pm

In view of what the Minister has said, would this deliberate delay in the payment of fares be regarded as a deduction from wages? If so, would employees be entitled to take the matter to an industrial tribunal? It would be helpful to have an answer to that question.

Wages councils cover only certain people in certain services. The catering industry is one such service; hairdressing is another. The Paymaster General knows that, on certain MSC projects, meals are provided for the elderly. That is perfectly satisfactory, but all the employees involved in those projects are doing a job identical to the job performed by those in the catering industry. They are working in kitchens. They are serving, preparing and delivering food. If necessary, do those employees have recourse to the wages councils and to the wages inspectorate?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The previous disagreement between us was because both of us were relying upon what is usually completely reliable advice, but on that occasion it came to differing conclusions. On this occasion I am flying somewhat more blind. If I sail perfectly into error on this occasion, I shall write to the hon. Lady and correct what I am about to say.

The hon. Lady asked a very interesting question about what would happen to those employees who are covered by the wages councils as far as this definition of "deduction" is concerned. I understand that, when a deliberate deduction is made by the employer, it will be regarded as a deduction and will be subject to the provisions of the Bill. The dispute can be solved by an industrial tribunal. If, however, an employer makes a computation error — if, in other words, he makes a mistake—the matter will go to the courts. If there is a disagreement between the parties about what wages are properly due, that also will go to the courts. If, as I say, there is a deliberate deduction from what the employer knows to be due, it will be covered by the Bill and the matter will go before an industrial tribunal.

To relate that to the wages council provisions, if an employer is paying less than a wages council's required rate and if he knows that he is paying less than that which is properly due, which means that he is intentionally paying less than the wages council's rate, my understanding is that the hon. Lady is right and that the protections that are afforded under this part of the Bill will apply. If, however, the employer does not realise that a higher rate is properly due and he makes a computation error, that will not count as a deduction under the Bill and the matter will have to be resolved by the courts if the wages inspectorate is unable to sort it out in the ordinary way.

Ms. Short: I am grateful to the Paymaster General. I agree with his interpretation of the wording of this amendment. May I ask him for an undertaking: that if we are both right he will not amend the Bill; he will leave it as it is, so that workers who are illegally underpaid will have the right to go to an industrial tribunal on the grounds that they have suffered an illegal deduction?

Mr. Clarke: I am content to give that undertaking. When an employer deliberately makes a deduction below that which he knows to be lawfully due, that will be covered by this part of the Bill.

I know that the Bill is more limited in terms of protection than the Opposition would like, but everything that we have said about deductions will apply if an employer deliberately pays less than that which he knows legally to be the entitlement of the employee. An error or disagreement about the rate would be resolved in the courts.

To settle the bus fares issue, we must turn to the definition of wages in clause 7. I shall write to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) about the second part of his question, which I did not follow because I was considering the first part and listening with only one ear. The repayment of bus fares and other expenses is not covered by the definition of wages in clause 7, so a failure to pay extra expenses is not relevant. Clause 7(2)*(a)* expressly excludes from the definition of wages any payment in respect of expenses incurred by the employee.

Mr. Nellist: I understand that the Minister thinks that it is wrong for an employer wilfully to allow somebody to be paid less than that to which they are legally entitled, and that there should be some redress.

After I argued with the junior Minister in Committee I received a letter saying that anyone in receipt of family income supplement whose wages fell below the family income supplement baseline because of a deduction,

[Mr. Nellist]

would not have the right to claim anything extra from the DHSS because the assessment of FIS is based on the notional gross wage before deduction. Is there not a parallel between that and the concession that has just been made to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), in that the DHSS would willingly allow someone to fall below the official Government-defined poverty line by disregarding regular deductions?

Mr. Clarke: That was a good try. I do not accept the analogy. We are talking about a deduction by the employer. If the employer knows what his employee is legally entitled to, and pays less than that deliberately, he is making a deduction and must be prepared to comply with the Bill's provisions; otherwise, the employee has a remedy.

The way in which family income supplement is assessed and the definition of income for the purpose of making the annual assessment of FIS entitlement is a matter for DHSS regulations. The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) will have to raise the matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services if he wants to argue that the rules for FIS should be changed.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 2, line 40 at end insert—

'*(aa)* to any deduction from a worker's wages made by his employer, or any payment received from a worker by his employer, where the purpose of deduction or payment is the reimbursement of the employer in respect of any overpayment of wages made (for any reason) by the employer to the worker;'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 18.

Mr. Trippier: Under this amendment the provisions of part I will not apply to deductions made by an employer or payments received by him to recover earlier overpayment of wages. Deductions to recover overpayments of wages should not, in the Government's view, be caught by the Bill and employers should not be hampered in recovering such payments.

Since the Bill was published, representations have been made to the Government that it would lead to difficulties in payroll administration if it was not made clear that deductions from wages made merely to recover earlier overpayments of wages were not covered by the Bill.

It is the practice of some firms to make small overpayments of wages, for reasons of administrative convenience, that are later recovered. An example is where information on bonus or overtime payments are not available in the pay office until after the wages have to be paid—or the computer run—so a standard sum is paid with a small adjustment, up or down, the following week. Without this amendment, such downward adjustments would be deductions for the purposes of the Bill and thus unlawful unless explicitly provided for in the contract.

The effect would be to require contracts of employment to be rewritten to ensure that the employer does not fall foul of the Bill if he ever makes adjustments to recover anything overpaid, accidentally or for reasons of administrative convenience, in an earlier payment of wages. We do not want to cause such an upheaval in personnel practices and consequently propose to disapply the Bill to deductions to recover earlier overpayments.

There is no possibility of injustice arising from that. If a deduction is to recover an overpayment, the worker has received what is due to him. If the worker disputes that the deduction is for that purpose, he can, of course, complain to an industrial tribunal that will have to form a view on the matter.

Amendment No. 18 is required to avoid a situation where the Bill would make the enforcement of court or tribunal orders ineffective. Without the amendment, an employer who had obtained a court or tribunal order against a worker requiring the worker to pay an amount to the employer would be in breach of clause 1 of the Bill when he received a payment from the worker under the order. That would happen because, when the employer received the payment, it would not have been authorised by statute, by the contract, or with the prior written agreement of the worker. So the requirements of clause 1(2) of the Bill would not be met. It would obviously be a legal nonsense if an employer who obtained a court order against a worker found that he could not obtain the amount from the worker without being in breach of the Bill.

The amendment will resolve that by removing deductions and payments in such circumstances from the scope of clause 1. Payments may be received from the worker by the employer to meet the amount specified in the court or tribunal order without complying with clause 1(2). Alternatively, deductions from wages to meet the amount specified may be made without complying with clause 1(1), provided that the worker has given his prior agreement or consent in writing. The latter is a reasonable safeguard for the worker because it ensures that deductions to satisfy the order will be lawful only if he has agreed that the sum that he has been ordered to pay can be recovered by deduction from his wages. Furthermore, it is likely that if the employer decides to recover the amount by deductions, he will agree to do so in instalments, which is an obvious benefit to the worker.

Where the employer fails to obtain the prior written agreement of the worker, the provisions of clause 1 will apply and the deductions from wages will be in breach of the Bill. A worker would then have the right to complain to an industrial tribunal that an unlawful deduction had been made.

This amendment is essential to resolve an unintended consequence of the Bill and I ask the House to accept it.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 17, in page 3, line 11, leave out 'term' and insert 'provision'.

No. 18, in page 3, line 27, at end insert—

'*(e)* to any deduction from a worker's wages made by his employer with his prior agreement or consent signified in writing, or any payment received from a worker by his employer, where the purpose of the deduction or payment is the satisfaction (whether wholly or in part) of an order of a court or tribunal requiring the payment of any amount by the worker to the employer.'.—*[Mr. Trippier.]*

Clause 2

DEDUCTIONS FROM WAGES OF WORKERS IN RETAIL EMPLOYMENT ON ACCOUNT OF CASH SHORTAGES ETC.

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move amendment No. 21, in page 3, leave out lines 43 and 44 and insert—

'"pay day", in relation to a worker, means a day on which wages are payable to the worker;'.

Mr. Speaker: With this we shall take Government amendment No. 34.

Mr. Trippier: These two amendments are concerned with definitions—the definitions of "pay day" and of "demand for payment" in clauses 2 and 3. The two expressions are unclear without the amendments. The amendments are for clarification and do not change policy.

Clauses 2 and 3 introduce controls on deductions and payments on account of cash shortages or stock deficiencies, which are limited to 10 per cent. of any wages payable to a worker on a pay day. The question is whether the pay day should be the day on which wages are payable—that is, due to be paid—or the day on which they are actually paid.

Amendment No. 21 changes the definition of pay day in clauses 2 and 3 from

"any day on which any wages are paid to a worker"

to

"a day on which wages are payable to the worker".

The amendment is required because the day on which wages are paid is not always a precise concept. When wages are paid by direct debit to a bank account, it is not clear whether the day on which wages are paid is to be regarded as the day on which the employer authorises payment or the day on which it is credited to the worker's bank account, which will be later. The amendment does not, however, alter the way in which the controls on deductions related to cash shortages and stock deficiencies operate.

9.30 pm

Amendment No. 34 clarifies what the phrase "demand for payment" means in clause 3 and how and when a demand is to be made. Clause 3, inter alia, requires that an employer may not lawfully receive a payment on account of a cash shortage or stock deficiency unless he makes a demand for payment in writing on a pay day.

The amendment provides that a demand for payment is made if it is given to the worker, posted to the worker's last known address or left at his last known address either on the pay day or, if the pay day is not a working day —if it is a Bank Holiday—on the first working day of the employer's business following that pay day. The amendment is needed so that employers and workers can clearly understand how and when a demand for payment must be made.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 3, line 46, after 'worker', insert

'(whether on a regular basis or not)'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 23, in page 4, line 1, leave out

'directly with members of the public'.

Government amendments Nos. 24 and 25.

Mr. Trippier: The amendments fulfil an undertaking that I gave in Committee to consider further the need to ensure that te protections given by clauses 2 and 3, which ensure that deductions from wages or payments made by the worker to the employer that are related to cash shortages or stock deficiencies are limited to 10 per cent. of gross wages, apply to all workers who need such protection. As drafted, the Bill covers those workers who are engaged in retail transactions directly with members of the public. I think that it was the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) who said that those working in hospital or factory canteens might not be so covered as they sell goods to fellow workers rather than to members of the public.

The amendment ensures that the protection applies to all workers who are engaged in the sale or supply of goods to members of the public, fellow workers or other individuals in their personal capacities. The amendment ensures also that a person who sells both to companies and to the public is fully covered in respect of all his sales.

I hope that hon. Members will support the amendment and those grouped with it, which provide a useful clarification of the Bill and extend the protection that it offers. Amendment No. 23 was tabled by the Opposition and it was designed to achieve the same effect as amendment No. 24. In the light of the Government's amendment, I hope that the Opposition will withdraw amendment No. 23.

Ms. Clare Short: This is another small concession, but one of some consequence to some workers, which has been won by the Opposition. The House will be aware that it is the Opposition's view that the limitation of fines or deductions to 10 per cent. of gross wages should apply to all workers for all disciplinary purposes. We advanced that argument strongly when discussing the first group of amendments. I am certain that we won the arguments, but unfortunately we do not have enough votes in this place to amend the Bill, although the time seems to be rapidly approaching when we shall have them.

The amendment is of significance to all workers who handle stock or cash but do not deal directly with members of the public. An obvious example is those who work in staff canteens. There are many who work in that capacity who do not deal with the public but handle a great deal of food, stock and cash. If the amendment were not made, they would be liable to deductions or fines up to 100 per cent. rather than to the 10 per cent. limit which the Government, for some strange reason, have decided to provide as a protection for retail workers only.

The Minister has explained that the protection has been given to retail workers because it is in the retail sector that there is the most worry about cash shortage and stock deficiencies. He appears to be telling us that this is the sector in which employers—that is the group to which the Government talk—think that a lot of fiddling is going on and in which deductions should be made. It seems to turn logic on its head to say that because employers are so concerned, the deductions that they make should be limited. We are grateful for small mercies and glad that the protection for workers in retailing extends to workers in canteens who deal with cash and stock, but with fellow workers rather than members of the public.

Mr. Nellist: Perhaps my hon. Friend could refresh my memory about the other half of the reason that the Minister gave. Was not his justification for not accepting our amendment to extend the 10 per cent. limit to all workers that, unless employers could fine employees, they would not be willing to take more workers on, which would lead to increased unemployment? Is not confining the limit to retailing effectively saying that the Minister expects more jobs to be lost in retailing?

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend is right. The Minister used that argument. My hon. Friend has quite fairly extended

[Ms. Short]

the logic and exposed the ridiculousness of the Government's case for not extending the 10 per cent. limit.

The amendment will protect some workers. It will protect canteen workers and probably others whom we have not thought of. We are glad of that, but wish that we could have achieved the same for more workers. As the Government have conceded the point, I shall not press the amendment.

Mr. Martin: Is there any way in which the Minister can legislate to prevent employers from deducting trivial amounts from employees? Perhaps I could give an example.

In 1978, when I was a union officer, the Ayrshire and Arran health board, which is not noted for being a good employer, called in the police because it alleged that a woman canteen worker had a pint of milk in her bag. The police charged her and the procurator fiscal in Ayrshire decided that there was no case to answer.

The management sacked the woman, though, so I had to take the matter to an unfair dismissal tribunal. The union's time and resources were tied up. The unfair dismissal tribunal found in favour of the woman to the extent that she got a re-engagement order. For the sake of a pint of milk, the matter trundled on for months. Quite substantial Health Service resources must have been involved. Many of the officials who were sacking the woman for taking the pint of milk must have lifted a telephone from time to time, perhaps to tell their wives that they would be late, and used more of the health board's money than the lady in question.

It must be possible to put something into the Bill to prevent the small minority of employers who would do something so stupid from doing what the Ayrshire and Arran health board did. Had there been such provision, a great deal of money would have been saved.

Mr. Trippier: I do not know the background to the case that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) has mentioned. Perhaps he will elaborate later. I do not know whether the bottle came to be missing intentionally or accidentally.

There must be a clear understanding in a contract that deductions can be made. It may be that, when the matter was drawn to the attention of the industrial tribunal, that understanding was not in the contract so the employer was taking advantage of the position by dismissing the worker without any deduction being allowable under the terms and conditions of service. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman and his trade union colleagues tripped the employer up on that.

The provision in the Bill regarding that is perfectly adequate, and the Government do not wish to intervene further in the relationship between employers and workers.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made:

No. 24, in page 4, leave out line 2 and insert

'or with fellow workers or other individuals in their personal capacities;'.

No. 25, in page 4, line 5, leave out

'to members of the public'.

No. 26, in page 4, line 7, at end insert—

'(2A) Where the employer of a worker in retail employment makes a deduction from the worker's wages on account of a cash shortage or stock deficiency, the employer shall not be treated as making the deduction in accordance with section 1(1) unless (in addition to the requirements of that provision being satisfied with respect to the deduction)—

(a) the deduction is made, or

(b) in the case of a deduction which is one of a series of deductions relating to the shortage or deficiency, the first deduction in the series was made,

not later than the end of the period of 12 months beginning with the date when the employer established the existence of the shortage or deficiency or (if earlier) the date when he ought reasonably to have done so.'.

No. 27, in page 4, line 31, after 'provision', insert 'and subsection (2A) above'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Clause 3

PAYMENTS BY WORKERS IN RETAIL EMPLOYMENT ON ACCOUNT OF CASH SHORTAGES ETC.

No. 9, in page 4, line 44 leave out 'subsection (2)' and insert 'this section'.

No. 31, in page 5, leave out lines 6 to 11 and insert—

'(2A) A demand for payment in respect of a particular cash shortage or stock deficiency, or (in the case of a series of such demands) the first such demand, shall not be made—

(a) earlier than the first pay day of the worker following the date when he is notified of his total liability in respect of the shortage or deficiency in pursuance of subsection (1)*(a)* or, where he is so notified on a pay day, earlier than that day, or

(b) later than the end of the period of 12 months beginning with the date when the employer established the existence of the shortage or deficiency or (if earlier) on the date when he ought reasonably to have done so.'.

No. 32, in page 5, line 14 leave out 'subsection (2)' and insert 'this section'.

No. 33, in page 5, line 25 leave out 'subsection (2)' and insert 'this section'.

No. 34, in page 5, line 29, at end insert—

'(5) For the purposes of this Part a demand for payment shall be treated as made by the employer on one of the worker's pay days if it is given to the worker, or posted to, or left at, his last known address—

(a) on that pay day, or

(b) in the case of a pay day which is not a working day of the employer's business, on the first such working day following that pay day.'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Clause 4

PROVISIONS SUPPLEMENTARY TO SS. 2 AND 3

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move amendment No. 35, in page 5, line 30, leave out subsection (1) and insert—

'(1) In this section "final instalment of wages", in relation to a worker, means—

(a) the amount of wages payable to the worker which consists of or includes an amount payable by way of contractual remuneration in respect of the last of the periods for which he is employed under his contract prior to its termination for any reason (but excluding any wages referable to any earlier such period), or

(b) where an amount in lieu of notice is paid to the worker later than the amount referred to in paragraph *(a)*, the amount so paid,

in each case whether the amount in question is paid before or after the termination of the worker's contract.'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 36, 37 and 40.

Mr. Trippier: These are a set of technical amendments to the first three subsections of clause 4. The subsections ensure that the limits on deductions to payments related to cash shortages or stock deficiencies established by clauses 2 and 3 do not apply to the final payment of wages.

Mr. Eastham: As the Minister rightly said, these are technical amendments. I was intrigued by the Government's subtle use of the word "instalment", as, originally, the word "payment" was used. I do not understand the reason for that change, and I am always suspicious when sophisticated language is used. As a consequence of that change, how much more will workers lose? I am not a lawyer, and perhaps the answer is obvious to a barrister or solicitor.

I also wish to ask about the reference to

"an amount in lieu of notice."

We are sometimes, rightfully, suspicious when an employer decides to get rid of an employee who, if he must leave the premises immediately, is entitled to pay in lieu of notice. I wonder whether the amendment has been drafted in such a way that the accumulation of 10 per cent. deductions, which could be fabricated, could mean that an employer could withhold the pay in lieu of notice, thus practically sending the worker home with nothing. I should be grateful if the Minister could clarify those points for me because I am a little baffled.

Mr. Caborn: I wish to follow that point by asking about people who have accrued holiday pay. Sometimes the accumulation of holiday pay depends on the time served in a company or at a place of work. If holiday pay were to be paid to a person leaving a company, would that also be subject to the type of deduction to which my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) has referred?

Will the Bill have a different effect if the new type of pay slips which the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced recently were implemented, in which 20 per cent. of one's wages can be tax-free? If so, does that mean that it would also be deduction-free in relation to the 10 per cent.? I should be interested to know the answer, because it might throw a new light on the Bill, given the new wages structure that the Chancellor of the Exchequer apparently wants to introduce.

9.45 pm

Ms. Clare Short: The Minister spoke extremely briefly to the amendments. He did not explain why the Government had introduced them. Perhaps that was because he got into something of a muddle in Committee about what clause 4(1) really meant, about what was covered and about what was included in the final payment of wages. I suspect that the amended drafting is considered to be better, and it probably is. However, it would be interesting to hear the Minister explain its introduction.

We must not let this opportunity pass without saying how strongly we object to the Government's definition of the final payment of wages, and the way in which they have exempted that final payment from any protection, such as the 10 per cent. limitation for a small group of retail workers who are accused of cash shortages or stock deficiencies. The way in which the amendment provides for payment in lieu of notice to be treated is an invitation to an employer to confiscate the whole payment in lieu of notice when someone is being sacked as a result of a dispute. It is outrageous that the Government should invite employers to treat their workers like that. If there is a case for giving a 10 per cent. protection to workers, it also extends to the final payment of wages.

Judging by the way in which the Government have drafted the provision and have drawn attention to money paid in lieu of notice, they are telling employers that, if they decide to sack someone and to accuse them of something that they have not done, they can deduct all the money paid in lieu of notice. The Government are saying that they can do that if they want to be spiteful, and that they will go to great trouble to draft the Bill to enable them to do so. We have here yet another example of the Government's mean-mindedness, which infects every part of the Bill.

Mr. Trippier: That is a bit thick. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said that the Government were mean-minded. The hon. Lady knows from the amendments that I have tabled that I have been anxious to meet many of the points made in Committee. She has been churlish in remarking on the Government's attitude and my attitude, and has claimed credit every time she thinks that the Labour party has pulled something off. There has been no recognition of the fact that we debated the matter fully in Committee and that I sometimes accepted the points made. That is unfair.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Trippier: I shall give way in a moment. The attitude adopted by the hon. Member for Ladywood would not, I am sure, have been adopted by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo). But I shall try to respond to some of the points made in this short debate.

Ms. Short: It is, perhaps, appropriate that we should fall out at this late stage. But we have made it clear to the Minister throughout that the Bill is rotten. The Bill's whole nasty approach will lead to an increase in poverty among the poorest paid workers in the country. We also made it clear that we did not think that there was much point in simply getting angry with one another. We wanted to make a detailed case against the Bill, and that is what we tried to do in Committee, instead of shouting at one another incoherently.

In the course of that long dispute, some minor concessions were won. We were grateful for every scrap that we could get. Each time we got a scrap, we said that it was a scrap and that it did not affect the fundamentally objectionable nature of the Bill. However, we were grateful for the scraps, because they would protect some workers. That remains the position. The Minister knows it. There has never been any dispute about it. For him to suggest that we are somehow changing our position at this late stage is quite wrong.

Mr. Trippier: I am not suggesting in any way that the Opposition have changed their position. I respect the fact that they have opposed the Bill throughout and, have done so, as far as they were able, in a constructive manner. I am simply saying that I think the hon. Lady has been unfair today. I was referring not to the Opposition, just to the hon. Lady.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) referred to holiday pay. Clause 7 deals with the meaning of wages and what is incorporated in the definition of wages under clause 4. The hon. Gentleman's point is covered in clause 7(1)*(a)*.

I do not agree with the hon. Member for Ladywood when she says that the Opposition do not like the fact that any outstanding moneys which are due to an employer could not or should not be collected on the last day that a payment is made to a worker. If money is due to an

[Mr. Trippier]

employer, it is absolutely right that it should be collected. If there is not sufficient money in the gross pay which is paid in the last payment, it is absolutely right that the employer should have recourse to a court of law, which he does through civil proceedings, for collection of the money, although I suspect, as I have said in Committee, that on many occasions an employer would not go to that trouble.

I am under an obligation to deal with a point raised by the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham). The amendment changes the term "final payment of wages" to "final instalment of wages". Although that is of no legal consequence—I do not want the hon. Gentleman to read anything into this—it conveys more satisfactorily the concept that the payment is the final one in a series of periodic instalments of wages. The amendment also shortens and clarifies the proposed subsection. If the Opposition wish to be consistent—they have said that they like the shorter wording in the Bill—perhaps they will agree to the amendments which are purely technical.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 36, in page 5, line 44, leave out from 'from' to end of line 6 on page 6 and insert

'the worker's final instalment of wages.'.

No. 37, in page 6, line 9, leave out

'payment of wages is made'

and insert

'instalment of wages is paid, but (whether or not the requirements of section 1(2) would otherwise be satisfied with respect to it) his employer shall not be treated as receiving any such payment in accordance with section 1(2) if the payment was first required to be made after the end of the period referred to in section 3(2A)*(b)*.'.

No. 38, in page 6, line 10, at end insert—

'(3A) Legal proceedings by the employer of a worker in retail employment for the recovery from the worker of any amount in respect of a cash shortage or stock deficiency shall not be instituted by the employer after the end of the period referred to in section 3(2A)*(b)* unless the employer has within that period made a demand for payment in respect of that amount in accordance with section 3.'.

No. 39, in page 6, line 11, leave out from 'that' to 'on' in line 13 and insert

'the employer of a worker in retail employment is (in accordance with section 1(2), as it applies apart from section 3(1)) entitled to receive any amount from the worker'.

No. 40, in page 6, line 21, leave out

'payment of wages is paid'

and insert

'instalment of wages is paid'.—*[Mr. Trippier.]*

Clause 5

COMPLAINTS TO INDUSTRIAL TRIBUNALS IN RESPECT OF UNAUTHORISED DEDUCTIONS ETC.

Amendments made: No. 41, in page 6, line 40, after '1(1)', insert

'(including a deduction made in contravention of that provision as it applies by virtue of section 2(2A))'.

No. 42, in page 7, line 6, leave out '(2)'.—*[Mr. Trippier.]*

Clause 7

MEANING OF "WAGES"

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I beg to move amendment No. 45, in page 9, line 23, at end insert—

'*(aa)* any payment by way of an advance under an agreement for a loan or by way of an advance of wages (but without prejudice to the application of section 1(1) to any deduction made from the worker's wages in respect of any such advance);'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No 46, in page 9, line 26, at end insert

', allowance or gratuity in connection with the worker's retirement or as compensation for loss of office;'.

No. 47, in page 9, line 29, at end insert—

'(2A) Where any payment in the nature of a non-contractual bonus is (for any reason) made to a worker by his employer, then, for the purposes of this Part, the amount of the payment shall—

(a) be treated as wages of the worker, and

(b) be treated as payable to him as such on the day on which the payment is made.'.

Mr. Clarke: It is a long time since I have heard technical and drafting amendments debated with such heat, vigour and care on Report, but I hesitate to say that amendments Nos. 45, 46 and 47 are technical amendments. They deal with clause 7 which sets out the definition of wages. They are designed to sort out some confusion in the way loans and advances of wages, lump sums on retirement or loss of office and non-contractual bonuses are treated in the definition of wages. I commend them to the House.

Mr. Nellist: It is only 9.52 pm and I do not wish to disappoint the Paymaster General.

Mr. Speaker: It is no disappointment—the hon. Member has all night.

Mr. Nellist: Hon. Members who have taken part in the debate, which has lasted for about five hours, may be content to leave this group of technical amendments so that their hon. Friends from London can deal with the EEC and parental leave for child care. However, before we conclude, I shall ask the Paymaster General for an explanation of the effects of the Government amendments. It is not good enough, even at the tail end of a long day's debate, to state that the amendments are additions to matters outside the definition of wages. Subsection (2) payments are excluded from subsection (1) sums. There was heated debate in Committee on the sums mentioned in subsection (1), especially about bonuses and piecework rates. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) moved an amendment on that point. He may think that the points he made then are still worthy of being repeated.

Why are there such large changes in the definitions of wages, especially with respect to the exclusion of benefits in kind, in the Wages Bill 1986 compared with the Truck Act 1831? The original definitions in the Truck Acts are superseded by the provisions in clause 7. There was no mention of many of the benefits in kind which are still pertinent to workers, including tied accommodation, meals on premises and—I hesitate to say this because of our earlier exchanges — company cars, which the Minister assured me were a benefit in kind. By not mentioning those items, does clause 7 mean that they are up for grabs when it comes to deductions? If the deduction

is limited to 10 per cent. for specified items, and other items are not mentioned, does that mean that those that are not mentioned can be made the subject of larger deductions by employers, if they wish?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) is entirely within his rights to ask for a more careful explanation if he is worried about these technical amendments. The starting point of his query was the question: why are we taking such care to draft the definition of wages in this way and moving a little from the definition in the 1831 Act? I remind him that the Bill contains two innovations which make it important that we get the definition right and which will assist those in tribunals and elsewhere who have to apply it.

One innovation is the 10 per cent. limit on the deductions that can be made from the wages of retail workers and the other is the new right of access to an industrial tribunal where there is a dispute about the deductions. It is important, especially in calculating the 10 per cent. limit, to know exactly what that limit is and to have an extremely precise definition of wages. The amendment has been moved because it represents a further attempt to define exactly what is meant by wages and what is excluded.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East correctly spotted the fact that all three amendments are concerned with additions to the list of matters which, for the purposes of the Bill, are not to be regarded as wages. Although that may sound disadvantageous, it is not.

On amendment No. 45, by ensuring that loans and advances of wages are not included in the meaning of wages, one reduces the total amount that counts as wages and therefore reduces the amount that the employer can lawfully deduct under the 10 per cent. limit. If loans or advances of wages were permitted to be added to the total sum for the purposes of this definition, the effect would be to weaken the protection to the worker, because 10 per cent. of the lawful deduction would be a higher sum.

Amendment No. 46 defines payment by way of payments that are akin to pensions, which are already excluded in the Bill as originally drafted and which were considered in Standing Committee. We consider that lump sums paid on retirement and sums paid in compensation for loss of office are similar to payments by way of pension. They have been excluded from the definition of wages because we believe that disputes about such matters should be resolved by the courts and are not really within the compass and competence of the tribunals which would otherwise find themselves being drawn into this somewhat complex area.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Clark: May I just answer all the hon. Gentleman's queries?

Amendment 47 deals with payments made to a worker by his employer of sums to which the worker is not contractually entitled. It can be called a "non-contractual bonus". When those sums are paid to the worker, they would not, as originally defined in the Bill, count as wages because they are not legally payable. The amendment ensures that, for the purposes of part 1 of the Bill, repayments are treated as wages and subject to the provisions.

Mr. Nellist: Does amendment No. 46 include accrued holiday pay in the payment of money to workers for redundancy and so on?

Mr. Clarke: I had sat down because of the 10 o'clock rule. Holiday pay is already dealt with in the Bill as drafted. In clause 7 on page 9 holiday pay is "wages" for the purpose of this part of the Bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 46, in page 9, line 26, at end insert—

', allowance or gratuity in connection with the worker's retirement or as compensation for loss of office;'.

No. 47, in page 9, line 29, at end insert—

'(2A) Where any payment in the nature of a non-contractual bonus is (for any reason) made to a worker by his employer, then, for the purposes of this Part, the amount of the payment shall—

(a) be treated as wages of the worker, and

(b) be treated as payable to him as such on the day on which the payment is made.'. — [*Mr. Kenneth Clarke.*]

Clause 8

GENERAL INTERPRETATION OF PART I

Amendments made: No. 48, in page 10, line 3, leave out 'under his contract'.

No. 49, in page 10, line 5, at end insert—

'and "employed", in relation to a worker, accordingly means employed under his contract;'.

No. 50, in page 10, line 30, at end insert—

'(2A) Where the total amount of any wages that are paid on any occasion by an employer to any worker employed by him is less than the total amount of the wages that are properly payable by him to the worker on that occasion (after deductions) then, except in so far as the deficiency is attributable to an error of computation, the amount of the deficiency shall be treated for the purposes of this Part as a deduction made by the employer from the worker's wages on that occasion.

(2B) In subsection (2A) the reference to an error of computation is a reference to an error of any description on the part of the employer affecting the computation by him of the gross amount of the wages that are properly payable by him to the worker on that occasion.'.

No. 51, in page 10, line 32, leave out 'of his' and insert 'employed by him'.—[*Mr. Kenneth Clarke.*]

Further consideration of the Bill adjourned. — [*Mr. Kenneth Clarke.*]

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), to be further considered tomorrow.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

10.1 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 6871/83, draft proposals for a Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of men and women in occupational social security schemes, 5825/1/84, draft Directive on the application of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in self employed occupations including agriculture and on protection during pregnancy and maternity, and 4118/86, communication from the Commission to the Council concerning a medium term Community programme (1986/90) on equal opportunities for women; and endorses the Government's commitment to the principle of equal treatment while seeking to ensure that unnecessary burdens are not imposed on business in the United Kingdom.

I welcome this opportunity to debate these European Community documents. The draft directive on equal treatment in self-employment was originally proposed by the European Commission in 1984. We share its underlying objectives but along with several other member states doubt the wisdom of some of the proposals.

Its objectives are the elimination of any direct or indirect discrimination on the ground of sex which has the effect of preventing a person from obtaining a loan or other facilities to set up or run a business; the removal of legal and financial barriers to business partnerships between husband and wife, or the employment of one by the other; the recognition of a spouse's right to build up separate entitlement to maternity, invalidity, social security and retirement benefits; and the creation for such spouses of a legal right to receive consideration for the work they contribute, whether in cash or in some other form.

Of course, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 already deals with some of these matters. In particular, it makes it unlawful to discriminate in the provision of facilities such as loans on grounds of sex. The other point to stress is that there is now no obstacle in United Kingdom law to prevent spouses establishing a formal business relationship if they wish to do so. So article 5 worries us not at all. The difficulty with the directive lies, I think, in article 7, the detailed requirements of which seem likely to create as many problems as they attempt to solve. It is not in our view sensible to provide the spouse of a self-employed person with a legal right to receive consideration in cash or in kind for the work he or she performs. It is a principle of our legislation that it should not seek to regulate private relationships where there is no intention to create a legal business relationship. I am sure that no hon. Member wants to see husbands and wives taking their housekeeping disputes to the courts, but that could easily be the result of this sort of provision.

No one in the Government under-estimates the importance of self-employment and I am told that the number of self-employed women increased by some 25 per cent. between 1983 and 1985. It is Government policy to create a climate where their enterprise can prosper and to ensure that there are no unreasonable obstacles in their path. As I have said, our law already provides that there should be no discrimination in the provision of services that are essential to the formation of new businesses. In principle, therefore, I think that we would welcome a European measure which made that guarantee of equal treatment in self-employment part of Community law. But I do not think that we could accept a measure which placed an increased and unnecessary burden on small firms and provided for the interference of the law in personal relationships.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My hon. and learned Friend mentioned Community law. As most of us understand it, the European Community was established to enable free trade between the countries within Europe, which is a fairly sensible thing to do. Does it necessarily follow that we have to have the same legislation as other European countries with regard to men and women and equal opportunities? Are we not grown-up and mature enough to make our own decisions on the matter?

Mr. Waddington: The Community brings forward draft directives, and the member Governments have to make up their mind as to whether the draft directives are justified in view of the terms of the treaty. After that, the member states have to come to a decision whether the proposals put forward by the Commission are reasonable. I have to tell my hon. Friend that this draft directive is currently under discussion by member states at official level. It is likely that it will be amended, possibly quite substantially, before it is submitted to the Council of Ministers for discussion.

Mr. Marlow: I think that my hon. and learned Friend will feel like me, although I am not sure whether he would be prepared to say so. Were he to go round the pubs and working men's clubs and knock on doors in his constituency, and ask people whether this was an appropriate area for the Europeans to bring forward legislation, or whether it would be a more appropriate area for us to consider our own legislation, I think that the latter is the conclusion that he would get.

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend has brought forth an important point. Perhaps he will speak on the matter later. I had better stick to the terms of the debate and put to the House the apparent purpose of the draft directives, and then the House can come to its own judgment on them. I think that I have stated the legal position correctly. We are talking only about draft directives. They are now under discussion by officials and eventually the Council of Ministers will have to come to a conclusion on whether to accept them.

I had better move on to the draft directive on equal treatment in occupational social security schemes. The draft directive was issued by the European Commission as part of a continuing programme aimed at the elimination of the unequal treatment of men and women in the Community, and it is designed to bring clarity and, if possible, legal certainty to an area in which the application of equal treatment is often a matter of doubt for both workers and employers. It relates to occupational schemes providing benefits of a social security nature, for example, occupational sick pay schemes. But its main target, and the area where it would seem to have most application, is occupational pensions. Here it requires equality of treatment in access to scheme membership, in the conditions for reimbursement of contributions and the rights to deferred pensions, in the conditions for the grant of benefits and in the setting of levels of benefits and

contributions. The directive would also require equality of pension ages and benefits for surviving spouses, but permits the deferment of those provisions until equality in those respects is present in state social security schemes.

Within the United Kingdom there is already legislation that gives a measure of equality to men and women in occupational pensions schemes. The Social Security Pensions Act 1975 provides for equal access to membership, and lays down conditions for the preservation of benefits which apply equally to men and women. But there remain significant differences in the treatment of men and women in relation to pension ages, and survivors' benefits, and actuarial factors are used that reflect differences in the morbidity, mortality or life expectancy of men and women. It is there that the provisions of the draft directive could be of major importance.

In 1976 the Occupational Pensions Board produced its report on equal status for men and women in occupational pensions schemes. After detailed study, the board recommended that, because there is an obvious link between occupational and state schemes, when one comes to the fundamental issues of unequal pension ages and survivors' benefits, equality should not be enforced except in partnership with the state scheme.

This view is also enshrined in the draft directive which permits deferment of the introduction of equal treatment in relation to pension age, and in relation to the provision of benefits for surviving spouses for so long as such differences exist in the state scheme. A provision allowing deferment is welcomed by the Government, provided that it covers all survivors benefits, and also other benefits and provisions which are linked directly to pension ages.

As to actuarial data on the different life expectancy of men and women, the European Commission regards the use of such data as contrary to the principle of equal treatment if used to set different levels of benefit or contributions, but this approach has drawn almost total opposition from pensions practitioners and actuaries, not only within the United Kingdom but in other member states. It is argued, with some force, that actuaries take into account different factors in regard to ill-health, mortality or life expectancy, not simply by convention or through unjustifiable prejudice, but in order to establish the truth. The truth is that women generally live longer than men. Thus, even leaving aside any question of earlier retirement ages for women, their pensions are in payment for longer and, for a given level of benefit, are more expensive to provide. Unless these actuarial differences between men and women are disregarded, equal contributions for men and women provide lower benefits for women. Conversely, for women to receive equal benefits there have to be higher contributions.

This is a very large and complex area and the Government are now in discussion with the Association of British Insurers and others, about the possibility of using unisex actuarial tables in some areas of pensions provision. No conclusions have yet been reached but in the context of the draft directive, it is not essential that they should have been. What is important is whether the directive as drafted is viable in relation to United Kingdom occupational schemes, and in the best interests of men and women in this country; and it seems to us that some changes are needed. First, the directive should not have the effect of prohibiting the proper use of statistical data. Secondly, the directive should apply compulsorily only to periods of membership falling after the operative date of implementation, and those operating schemes should have a reasonable time in which to make the necessary changes to their rules.

The cost involved in the changes will vary from scheme to scheme, depending on their present benefit structure, on the balance of men and women and the measures necessary to implement equal treatment. Since we already have equal access to pension schemes and most benefit-defined schemes provide the same scale of personal benefits to men and women, and since the directive would not require immediate equalisation of provisions for survivors or pension age, the likely costs of a directive modified as outlined in the explanatory memorandum would not be likely to be very great overall.

In considering its response to the draft directive, the Government have consulted widely among those with a direct interest in the subject — those representing practitioners and scheme members. Many of the same bodies submitted evidence to the Select Committee on European Legislation. Inevitably there are differences of opinion, but the approach outlined by the Government in their explanatory memorandum commands considerable support.

Since the issue of the memorandum in August 1987 discussions have been taking place in Brussels. It is apparent that a similar view of the deficiencies of the original draft directive is held by a majority of other member states, and that the approach adopted by the United Kingdom Government offers the best hope of securing agreement.

Mr. Marlow: This is a complex issue and perhaps my hon. and learned Friend will be able to clarify it. Will he confirm that the draft directive applies not just to the provisions that Government will make but to provisions that the private sector pension schemes will make? If that is the case, will he also confirm that if at the moment men and women pay a certain amount for a pension, the whole lot will be thrown into the pot again and either men will have to pay relatively more or they will receive relatively less? Against the actuarial tables that he has been talking about, is not that profoundly unfair?

Mr. Waddington: With respect, we are not dealing with Government pension schemes. The draft directive is on equal treatment in occupational social security schemes. I am sure that my hon. Friend will wish to develop his argument on that in due course, but I must make that plain.

Lastly, let me deal with the second Community action programme on equal opportunities for women for the period 1986-1990, accompanying which was a draft Council resolution which, with some slight modifications, is likely to come before the Council shortly. It is a resolution which the Government would be very pleased to adopt.

We are fully committed to equal opportunities in the labour market and support the general theme of the new action programme. We particularly welcome the attention to education and training policies which expand women's occupational choice and we have already taken many positive steps in the seven areas where the programme recommends action by member states.

Under the first of these seven headings, "Improved Application of Existing Provisions", we can point to the Equal Opportunities Commission's excellent code of

[Mr. Waddington]

practice on employment which came into force last year. Under the second heading, "Education and Training", we can, I believe, claim significant achievements.

On education, Government policy is to continue to work for equal opportunities across all aspects of schools provision and to encourage girls towards higher achievements in those areas of the curriculum where they tend not to participate to their full advantage.

One of the most exciting advances in education in recent years has been the development of school-industry links. One initiative being sponsored by the Government this year is the executive shadows scheme, which the Department of Trade and Industry is running with the Institute of Directors. That will involve a significant number of top business executives — about 750 have joined the scheme so far and we are hoping for many more —being "shadowed" for a week by sixth form students, both girls and boys. In that way they can learn a lot about the opportunities for women in business today.

For older women, the Manpower Services Commission's full range of adult training programmes is open equally to men and women, and women are encouraged to consider non-traditional skills. In addition, the Commission has a small but valuable programme of special training for women. For example, there are some 2,000 places per year on the wider opportunities for women courses.

The third heading of the action programme is "Employment". Here a variety of measures are suggested for member states, including a review of discriminatory legislation, the original purpose of which was protective. We have, in fact, already carried out such a review, as a result of which we have brought forward proposals in the Sex Discrimination Bill to repeal the unnecessary and outdated restrictions on women's hours of work which prevent women being employed in jobs based on shift work or night work.

The programme also outlines the European Commission's continuing commitment to removing discrimination against women from member countries' tax systems. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has recently published a Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation which examines this and other issues. It looks closely at a system of independent taxation with transferable allowances which, in the words of the Green Paper,

"would give married women the same opportunity for privacy and independence in tax matters as their husbands".

The next matter referred to in the programme is headed "New Technologies" and the Government agree about the importance of increasing women's representation in occupations involving the new technologies. One of the MSC's priorities in the area of women's training is helping women to train for jobs in which there are actual or forecast skill shortages, and which are of key economic importance. That frequently means jobs involving new technology. The MSC also funds an Open University course for women returning to technological work after a spell away.

The fifth action area in the programme concerns

"social protection and social security".

The Government support the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security as set out in the 1979 social security directive and have reported to the European Commission on action taken to implement the directive.

The sixth heading is

"Sharing of Family and Occupational Responsibilities".

We support some of the measures proposed under this heading, for example the encouragement of more flexible working hours and of part-time opportunities for either sex. Where we differ from the European Commission is in regard to the draft directive on parental leave and leave for family reasons. The Government cannot accept that an instrument so burdensome on employers and detrimental to job prospects would enhance equal opportunities.

We recognise that many women—and many men—will want to combine family responsibilities with a career, but we believe employers and employees should be left free to agree between them the most suitable working arrangements for their own particular enterprise. Companies are already recognising the need to modify their traditional career patterns to recoup their investment in women. I commend the Engineering Council's report last year on career breaks. That demonstrated the importance of personnel policies that will attract the ablest young women into engineering and showed that many employers would be sympathetic to requests for longer than minimum maternity leave, reinstatement or non-standard working arrangements.

The communication refers to

"Increasing Awareness and Changing Attitudes"

and rightly stresses the importance of breaking down stereotyped images of men's work and women's work and their respective roles in society. There is much that I could say on that score, but I think that the House will agree that I have spoken long enough.

As must be obvious from all the action already taken in this area and from the list that I gave of measures that are being taken, we do not accept the strictures of the Opposition, as expressed in their amendment. The amendment looks pretty silly when set against the number of Opposition Members who are present to support it. It is a silly and inaccurate amendment, because it refers to "obstruction of equal pay for work of equal value". This Government, unlike the previous Labour Government, have provided for equal pay for work of equal value. I do not know why those who drafted the amendment were silly enough to insert that phrase.

10.23 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'approves the European Community Documents Nos. 6871/83, draft proposals for a Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of women and men in occupational social security schemes 5825/1/84, draft Directive on the application of the principle of equal treatment for women and men in self-employ occupations including agriculture and on protection during pregnancy and maternity, and 4118/86, communication from the Commission to the Council concerning a medium-term Community programme (1986/90) on equal opportunities for women; and deplores the Government's lack of commitment to the principle of equal treatment for women and men and equal opportunities for women, as demonstrated by its refusal to implement the directive on parental leave, its obstruction of equal pay for work of equal value, and its failure to extend invalid care allowance to married women.'.

Listening to the Minister one would think that we lived in a perfect world where men and women were equal in all respects and there were no problems apart from the

occasional document from the EEC. The fact is that there is considerable inequality in this country between men and women in all aspects of life. The Minister knows that discrimination against women is widespread, and no amount of glossing over the truth will hide that fact.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to make that remark, but I do not know what bearing it has on my speech. I was not discussing whether there is discrimination; of course there is some discrimination, but I was merely outlining the purpose of the Community documents.

Mr. Dubs: The purpose of the documents is to tackle discrimination in many areas of life in this country. The Minister said that the Government agreed with occasional items in the documents, but were not happy with the general thrust of the documents. The Minister of State made that clear and the Government motion makes it clear, too. The Government ask the House to take note of these documents. They do not say that they approve of them. There is a world of difference between the two.

It is not easy to tackle discrimination. There is no way in which one piece of legislation, no matter how large and wide-ranging, can deal with it. It takes years of effort and pressure slowly, item by item, to reduce discrimination, whether it is discrimination against women or discrimination against black people. The Government's record is not good. On one occasion after another, the Government have resisted the voice of common sense. They have not listened to those who have told them how to prevent discrimination.

There has been a European Court ruling on the Government's attitude towards different retirement ages for men and women. The Government did the absolute minimum to comply with that ruling. The Government have also consistently refused to give the same invalid care allowance rights to women as to men.

When I first looked at the EEC documents I thought that they represented real progress. Then I noted the wording of the Government's motion. They are reluctant even to approve these documents. That is the basis of this debate. If the Government had said that they welcomed these documents and that they would do their best to implement them——

Mr. Marlow: The Government said that.

Mr. Dubs: No, the Government did not say so. The Government have carped and found reasons for rejecting the bulk of the EEC documents. That is why the Opposition have tabled the amendment. The Minister knows that Britain has the worst record of any European country over complying with these types of directives.

I regret that these are EEC initiatives. I should have preferred them to be British initiatives. I am not a particular fan of the Common Market and its many institutions, but when sensible initiatives are put forward I believe that it is better for this country to agree that they are sensible and to adopt them. That is better than carping, because of the source from which they come. That is the basis of some of our disagreements with Conservative Members who sit below the Gangway. If the Government were to produce their own initiatives, we should not have to pay regard to the EEC directives. However, there are no Government initiatives. Therefore, we have to examine the EEC directives.

I shall comment briefly on the three documents. First, I shall deal with the medium term programme. It is a wide and all-embracing programme that is designed to tackle discrimination under many headings during the next few years. Therefore the Minister should have been less lukewarm when he referred to it. Some of the recommendations are sensible and good and they are worth adopting.

The Minister said that there is good integration between formal education and vocational guidance, and that there are good links between the workplace and school. I am not convinced by his argument. There are many areas where improvement is possible. We welcome the code of practice to which the Minister referred. However, it is the only new feature in this area that commends itself to the Opposition. It will make a major difference.

The document also refers to the importance of having women in teaching posts at all levels. The Minister did not refer to this point. The document refers to the need to provide opportunities for women to take training courses and to the need to make such opportunities easier by additional provision for child minding. The document also refers to the need for improved information and to the need for public sector employers to set an example. That is very important, as public sector employers are directly under the Government's control.

Some local authorities have shown useful initiatives on contract compliance. That is a means of bringing pressure to bear upon suppliers to the public sector. Contract compliance is a useful and important innovation, and I regret that the Government have not sought to adopt it. The Minister expressed support for it, but he was then told that this was not the direction in which the Government were going.

The document also refers to improving the opportunities for women in decision making. I think that that is well worth while, although it also refers to the

"opening up of political parties",

and I wonder whether that is as much in the Government's power as the directive suggests.

The document contains a useful suggestion about providing help for the disadvantaged, single parents and migrants — we would refer to members of the disadvantaged black community. It also refers to home workers. It contains a welcome suggestion about giving women greater opportunities in the new technologies.

Some of us were on the bus in the Members' Car Park last Monday inspecting an exhibition sponsored jointly by the Equal Opportunities Commission and British Gas introducing a scheme — "Women into Science and Engineering." I found it interesting that schoolgirls were so enthusiastic about computers and other aspects of science. That is a welcome development. I do not see why science, technology and computer studies should be the prerogative of boys. Some of the girls on the bus came from Wandsworth. They were full of enthusiasm and were determined not to allow boys to steal a march on them. That is an isolated initiative. I regret that there are not more.

The document refers to sharing family and occupational responsibilities, to parental leave and to schemes to improve leave for family reasons. I regret that the Government consistently say that they will not adopt such sensible proposals. The Minister talked in generalities. He

[Mr. Dubs]

said that the schemes were good but that the Government were against specific suggestions such as those on parental leave.

I welcome the document on equal treatment for people in self-employed schemes. I understand what the Minister said about the problem of legal arrangements between spouses, but the document contains many other useful proposals. The EEC says that the Government would have full discretion to implement the proposals in the best way appropriate to national circumstances. The document breaks new ground and makes useful proposals which would improve women's lot.

The occupational schemes initiative is worth while in terms of equal treatment for men and women when hit by sickness, invalidity, old age, accident, occupational disease and unemployment. A number of clear suggestions are made about action which should not be acceptable if equal treatment is to be the norm.

I regret the Government's attitude. I regret that the Government pay lip service to equal treatment for men and women. The Government say, "Yes. If it is easy we shall do it", but if there is any difficulty they capitulate and say no.

The Minister made a sorry speech. The women of our country will be angry and will regret that the Government have turned their back on a number of useful initiatives. The women of our country will not accept that and it is time that the Government realised it.

Equal Opportunities

10.34 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I disagree with almost everything that the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) said. I welcome the Minister's wise words. One always worries in such debates that the Minister will have to kow-tow to spurious ideas of equality and that some of the dafter notions about how to achieve equality will be on their lips. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister is more robust than that.

Tonight we are discussing three directives. I shall set aside the draft directive on equality in self-employment, because from what I have read of it we are already carrying out most of it—especially on equality of access to loans. The hon. Member for Pattersea should know that, because it was his Government who passed that legislation some 11 years ago. In law and in practice, the bulk of the suggestions in the directive have been carried out in this country for a long time.

I wish to concentrate on occupational pensions and on the overall Community action programme for equal opportunities for women. I note in passing that it proposes to spend 2·6 million ecu on the latter by the year 1990. I suspect that such groups as the late lamented GLC women's committee, which managed to spend £16 million before its demise, could show the Community a thing or two, yet it did not bring about a scrap of additional equality in this city.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend mentioned the late and unlamented GLC women's committee. As she has read and understands all the detail of the legislation, can she advise me whether it would be possible to have a women's committee without also having a men's committee?

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to the Minister, who is not only fully briefed by his Department but is a learned member of the law and therefore better able than I to advise my hon. Friend.

I wish especially to discuss pensions. Like most women Members, I take a close interest in my pension entitlement. I am statistically more likely to draw it than my male colleagues, and for far longer. Therefore, I take a close interest in pensions. My oldest constituent is a lady who will soon celebrate her 106th birthday. She has been drawing a pension for 70 years, and is taken to collect her pension by her son, who will be 87 this year. That is a fate that I suspect will befall a good number of the female members of our community, but precious few of the male members.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): If the equality of opportunity to live the sort of stressful life that is commonplace among men is extended to women, does my hon. Friend believe that women will continue to enjoy this ext

Mrs. Currie: Naturally and absolutely—it as been like that since Bible days and beyond, and it looks as though it will be like that for a few more millennia.

The occupational pensions draft directive seeks completely to ignore the differences in demography between men and women. The European Commission considers that the use of statistics relating to ill-health or life expectancy that differ for the two sexes is contrary to the principle of equal treatment if used to set different levels of benefit or contribution. Yet male and female mortality rates are different and women do live longer than men. One might as well try to abolish the real world.

I call in evidence professor David Wilkie, research actuary at Standard Life Assurance in Edinburgh. Back in November 1983 he warned of

"enormous difficulties in the crude implementation of a principle of equality. This was quite inappropriate for funded schemes."

He was absolutely right.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The hon. Lady referred to life expectancy being different, but the report from the Comission states:

"differences in life expectancy are very clear-cut between categories of male workers, according to the occupation pursued: if account is not generally taken of them in calculations it is difficult to see why an exception should be made only in the case of female workers."

Does not the hon. Lady agree with that?

Mrs. Currie: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will wait until the last few words of my speech, when I shall take up some of his points.

If women want equality of treatment, they must earn it. They are earning it substantially because more than 60 per cent. of women are working, and more than 70 per cent. of those of my generation are doing so. We now form over 41 per cent. of the work force, and the percentage is rising. We have been mightily successful in the new forms of employment that have become available in recent years as we seem to be taking the bulk of the new jobs.

If women want equality of treatment, they must pay for it. They must earn it and pay for it, and that is where it gets harder. I suspect that many of my sisters are not willing to pay. Many of the women who are working now are paying little or no tax and low-level or no national insurance contributions. By far the largest bulk of women currently drawing pensions are doing so on their husbands' contributions and not on their own. National insurance contribution law changed in the mid-1970s, but it will be many years before a full generation of women are drawing state pensions that are based entirely on their own contributions and not those of their husbands.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State mentioned the Green Paper on personal taxation, which proposes transferable allowances. That was widely welcomed, but one of the implications for the 2 million women who are currently paying no tax on their earnings is that they will have to do so in future. They will not like that, and they will not thank my hon. and learned Friend or any of my colleagues for the equality that they are buying.

Many of the calls by women for equality of treatment ignore the whole question of paying for it. It is part of the general malaise of the British people that we all want the services but think that there is a special tree growing in No. 10 Downing street that has little golden apples on it that will allow someone else to pay.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The hon. Lady is presenting a picture of women not wanting to pay. Is she aware that, because the Government are putting such emphasis on increasing part-time jobs, with most of them going to women, most women do not earn enough to be called upon to pay contributions?

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman has put my argument in a slightly different way. If and when the time comes and the rules are changed and women are required to pay tax and national insurance contributions, every Member of this place will have a postbag full of letters from women saying, "If this is equality, I do not want it." I look forward to the day when they will say, "We want this and we are prepared to pay for it."

Mr. Field: That will occur only when women have the chance to obtain full-time jobs.

Mrs. Currie: They do have the chance. We all have the chance. These opportunities are taken up.

If we want equality, it will cost us. If we believe in equality, we should be willing to pay. If we are not the bulk of the work force but we are the bulk of dependants, we must accept inequality, which cheerfully and wickedly works in our favour—in other words, it is the men who are paying—or start digging deeper into our handbags. That is a reality that we must begin to face. Whatever the Common Market says, the demography will not go away, and neither will the inexorable logic that that imposes.

We see exactly the same double-think in employment protection. We have heard about the sex discrimination Bill that is to be introduced this year, which will remove the protection that prevents women from working at night and in certain occupations. Women in my constituency have told me, especially those who are breadwinners, that they welcome the proposed change. They would like to see the restrictions removed, but self-appointed women's groups are talking about women being at risk and how dangerous and difficult it will be if women have to work at night or undertake the sort of dreadful work that some men have to do. There are howls of rage on those grounds.

It seems that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister is on a hiding to nothing, but I wish him well. I should like to see the present restrictions removed and to see competent people, whether male or female, take their place in the job market as they will, wherever possible. I support him on that, but I warn him that he will find himself up against the women's groups, which are all so keen to have the directive on equality which is causing the changes to be brought about.

I long for a world in which we no long see the words "man" and "woman" in every piece of legislation that is written. I would prefer a world in which we see people —collections of individuals—with their own ambitions and abilities. Each person should be encouraged — I agree with some of what has been said this evening—to make his or her best efforts and the best contribution that he or she can make to our society. I want a world in which family responsibilities are taken seriously by all the members of the family, preferably before the family actually arrives, and in which those responsibilities are shared not in an artificial way, not in the way that is set out in the directive, but according to the tastes, abilities and interests of all concerned. That is the true path to equality of recognition and equality of achievement for women in Europe, and I commend it to the House.

10.44 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): In the two years that I have been a Member of this House there have been few debates on equality between men and women, and they have always been greeted with ridicule by Conservative Members. This is a serious subject that ought to be debated properly. I remember my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) speaking about parental leave. Her speech was rubbished throughout by Conservative Members who refused to give her a fair hearing. I hope that we have some semblance of a decent debate today. If hon. Members have nothing better to do than ridicule and make fun of serious proposals, they should leave now.

The Government's attitude to equality between the sexes is clear from their being prepared only to take note of the various Community documents. The Government have almost always had to be prompted by legal action in the Community even to begin to amend the sex discrimination and equal pay legislation, which was progressive in its time, but which have loopholes that have been described time and again. The Government are dragging their feet on the Sex Discrimination Bill in the other place. Discussions in the Community on further directives or legislation to promote equality will obviously not be treated seriously.

In 1981, the Equal Opportunities Commission recommended 25 amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. The Government have accepted only three. That shows how seriously they take the subject. They have accepted the equal pay recommendation, which is to widen the definition of equal pay on which a claim can be based. The Government are also accepting the reference to collective agreements and the reference to include small firms and undertakings.

Anyone who has followed what has happened in the European Court of Justice can only be ashamed by the attitude of Britain, which is depicted by Conservative Members who do not understand what proposals are being made, cannot be bothered to listen to the arguments and have never taken the subject seriously while they have been in the House.

Those who have experience of being in the European Parliament can only feel ashamed that Britain has appeared before the European Court of Justice on sex discrimination issues more than any other EC country. I do not know how the Minister expects to be believed when he says that the Government are full of good intentions, bearing in mind the Government's refusal since 1979 to tighten loopholes in the sex discrimination and equal pay legislation.

Miss Helen Marshall, the retired dietician, is the most recent in a long line of women who have caused the European Court of Justice to pronounce Britain's equality laws as leaving women far from equal with men. She fought for six years against her enforced retirement at an earlier age than if she had been a man doing the same job in the National Health Service. The Government have acted with some speed to implement that particular ruling against the compulsory retirement of women at the age of 60, but it is a pity that they did not see fit to rectify the anomaly until ordered to do so by a court outside the United Kingdom. When the Sex Discrimination Bill is suitably amended, probably this summer, women will have the legal right to stay at work until they are 65.

That is a far cry from the early 1970s, when Britain seemed to be at the forefront of those giving women more equal status, particularly at work. The key legislation was the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 — both infants of a Labour Government. The European Commission has taken a much more genuinely equal view of women's status through a series of directives which the Government have repeatedly refused to

implement. Britain has been one of the states most prone to drag its feet to obey them. A series of defeats at the European Court of Justice has torn both those Acts asunder, leaving Britain with a poor image on equality.

It is worth looking briefly at some of the background. Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome states that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work. Pay is defined as the ordinary basic or minimum wage or salary and any other consideration in cash or kind which the worker receives from the employer. The Council of Ministers has also adopted three directives on sex equality at work. The 1975 equal pay directive sets the principle of equal pay for equal work. The 1976 equal pay treatment directive aims to overcome sex discrimination in the hiring of staff, in vocational training, and in promotion and working conditions. It also forbids sex discrimination, particularly in connection with marital or family status. That directive was breached by Miss Marshall's enforced retirement at a younger age than a man.

The 1979 social security directive forbids discrimination over contributions or entitlements to social security and benefit schemes. The British Equal Opportunities Commission and the European Court have highlighted time after time Britain's failure to treat women equally, although many other EEC states have also been found dragging their feet.

I shall not go through all the incidents in which the United Kingdom has been dragged before the European Court of Justice, but the court ruled against Britain in 1982. As a result, Britain had to amend the Equal Pay Act. Since 1 January 1984 women have been entitled to equal pay for work of equal value. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) seems to believe—I suggest she looks at the new earnings survey 1984—women were still earning less than men in 1984 in a range of occupations, including those where the concept of equal value is easy to assess. Recently, the EC backed a test case where a cook from Cammell Laird claimed her training and work was of equal value to that of other craftsmen in the company. That case will be dealt with shortly. If that cook wins, the Equal Pay Act will be redundant in all but name. Women will once again have scored a victory, with enormous cost implications for private and public sector employees.

Mrs. Currie: I should be grateful if the hon. Lady would explain how insisting on higher pay for women will aid the promotion of employment for women. Will it not result in many of those good ladies losing their jobs because their employers cannot afford to keep them on?

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Lady has missed the whole point. I was arguing not for higher pay for women but for equal pay for women doing equal work. If she had looked at the new earnings survey, she would have seen that women's earnings as a percentage of men's earnings in a whole range of occupations are much lower. That is the point. We want equal pay for equal work. I was not arguing for higher earnings.

Mr. Cohen: The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) implied that higher pay meant job losses. But does not the privatisation of, say, hospital cleaning mean lower pay and fewer jobs?

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. The information from Conservative Central Office is obviously not as good as the Labour party's information, which is contained in "Women, Low Pay and Employment Protection". If Conservative Members want to know the facts about low pay and the employment of women, they should look at a copy of that document. They might find it very useful, and discover what low pay is all about.

The policies of the European Commission can be effective only if national Governments have the will to implement them. I believe that organisations and individuals have a role in putting pressure on their Governments. The United Kingdom Government are the only Government, of course, planning to exercise a general veto on the parental leave measure. *[Interruption.]* Nine other EC countries have already introduced various forms of parental leave. Thus, once again, this country is dragging its feet. I hope that those women who listen to the debate or who read about it tomorrow will write to some of the reactionary Conservative Members present and spell out their views on this important issue.

Nowhere are these European Community policies needed more than in the United Kingdom. Three important directives are returning to the Council of Ministers for ratification in June. All three have been blocked by the United Kingdom Government in the past.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Well, they have done something right, anyway.

Mrs. Clwyd: It is interesting to hear Conservative Members say how much they approve of blocking measures for equal treatment for men and women— *[Interruption.]* I hope that their constituents are listening. The first directive proposes equal treatment for men and women in occupational security schemes. The second introduces protection for self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood, and the third covers parental leave. No doubt the Government will again be dragged screaming and kicking in front of the European Court of Justice for failing to implement EC directives when they become law. If the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South has read the new report of the Equal Opportunities Commission, which clearly showed the amount of sex discrimination in recruitment, she cannot possibly believe the arguments that she put forward. That report found that most employers still saw jobs in terms of men's or women's work. They specifically seek women to fill the jobs offering lower pay, and poor promotion prospects.

The report said that employers neither understood nor were they concerned with upholding the sex discrimination legislation. The research took 10 years. It was very thorough. I do not think that even Conservative Members would dispute the findings. For almost half the vacant jobs, the employer already had in mind the sex of the person to fill the post, even though 86 per cent. of the jobs attracted applicants of both sexes. Discrimination occurred between men and women according to the characteristics of the jobs. Employers preferred women for the jobs with lower pay, fewer promotion prospects and where work colleagues and supervisors were female.

Let us not argue for one moment that women receive equal treatment. That is simply not true in terms of pay, social security and a range of provisions. I wish that Conservative Members would try, for once, to conduct a reasonable debate on this important issue. I am sure that women electors in their constituencies will show their

[Mrs. Clwyd]

disdain for the way in which they treat problems that affect those women, and their disdain for the way in which they treat them in the House. I think that it is disgraceful, and Conservative Members should be ashamed of themselves.

11.1 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I endorse many of the thoughtful and correct comments of hon. Members whatever their party. *[Interruption.]* I think that we would agree that it is rather sad that the public school boy hooligans are out in force tonight.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): They are not public school boys. They are a poorly educated lot.

Mr. Kennedy: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It may be an unfair reflection on public schools. *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members will allow me to to do so, I shall endorse many of the points and thoughts that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) put forward.

Mr. Budgen: Has the hon. Gentleman heard the arguments before?

Mr. Kennedy: I noticed that the hon. Gentleman breezed in half way through the debate. I hardly think that he is in a position to make such a comment. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley made a lengthy speech. I shall be curtailed from doing so because the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) wishes to contribute before the winding-up speeches begin. I think that we should conclude on a high note of levity.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) put forward her view of the legislation. She told us that it was up to society to treat people as people and that such legislation was not necessarily helpful. It is worth remembering that the hon. Members for Cynon Valley and for Derbyshire, South, are in this institution, very much the exception rather than the rule in terms of their sex and their membership of the House. In considering in detail, as the documents do, the need to change not only attitudes but Government policies to provide fairer treatment and opportunities for men and women, we need look no further than the House of Commons, which is one of the most drastically unrepresentative institutions in western Europe. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should remember that, earlier this week, the alliance was delighted to welcome a lady into the House of Commons as one of our Members of Parliament.

I endorse the view that the Minister's opening speech was somewhat disappointing. The Government have given a lukewarm response to the draft directives. It is strange that the remaining bastions of liberal thought, as they affect legislation in this country, are invariably the House of Lords, the High Court and European legislation or directives. Little innovative or progressive work in these matters is initiated in the House of Commons by the Government. Time and again we find ourselves at this hour of the night debating draft directives and alterations to statutory instruments which are the result of external pressure on the Government, not a positive desire by the Government to promote policies on sex discrimination which should have broad support and in which Parliament should show the lead. This is a matter for all parties, not one party or one side of the House.

The Government's reluctance to give these documents the wholehearted approval which they should have is very much related to the point made by the pensions industry on the implications of equal treatment on existing United Kingdom legislation. The Government may take cognisance of the views of the pension industry and reflect its concerns about the possible effects of these directives if enacted in Britain. However, I wish that they had been willing to give so much attention to that industry's views when they reformed the state earnings-related pensions scheme. If the Government were a little more consistent and less selective in listening to and ignoring the views of financial institutions, they might have had slightly more credibility in advancing this argument. The Government's response is disappointing. We cannot and will not support it.

We accept that, in taking a rational look at the horrendous long-term costs of pension provision, there cannot be overnight reform. No one suggests that there can be. The Minister rightly emphasised that point. If we want the principle of equality of treatment, as opposed to equality of access which we have under existing legislation, and want greater sexual equality through our institutions and our legislation, we must start to be more committed and wholehearted and stop waiting for Europe, the courts or the House of Lords to tell us how to make our decisions.

Until we have a House of Commons that reflects more accurately the breakdown of society into two sectors, it is highly unlikely that we shall have a Government who are as committed as they should be. Until that day comes, I doubt that this Government will bring forward the type of legislation that we want. On that basis, the Goverment's response is inadequate and disappointing, and we shall not support it.

11.8 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): When I first became a Member, I may have been a little naive and a little simple—*[Interruption.]* I thought that that would get them going, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believed that Governments could decide and choose what legislation they wanted to bring forward. I did not realise the extent to which outside lobbies, bodies and foreign institutions were able to bully, cajole and press Governments into bringing forward the sort of nonsense that we are considering. As a member of a Conservative governing party which was elected on the platform of less law, I am appalled that this sort of nonsense has been brought before us tonight. If I had brought a random sample of my constituents here to watch our proceedings and they had seen that we were discussing this issue, not because we in the United Kingdom wanted to discuss it, but because we had been told by Europeans to do so, they would have been appalled and amazed.

Europe is about trade and co-operation. It is not about Socialism. It is not about imposing complex legislation of a pan-European nature on social issues. I understand that day by day, week by week and month by month, the Labour party is becoming more enamoured of the European Community. We understand why; because of the bureaucracy there and because of the ability to espouse Socialism and force Socialism on this country from the institutions on the other side of the Channel.

We heard a lot from the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) about the European courts, and she is

ashamed that we are made to take measures because of the European Court. I will tell the hon. Lady, as the vast majority of my constituents would tell her, that we could not give a fig for European courts. We are legislatively mature enough and long enough in the tooth to decide on our own social policy, our own measures and our own laws, and it is only right that we should make our own laws without having advice and influence from overseas.

The hon. Lady, who took about 20 minutes of the House's time, was going on about discrimination against women. What about discrimination against men? When men get the pension at the same age as women, I will pay a little more attention to what the hon. Lady says. When we act fairly towards men who suffer divorce and whose ex-wives, who are in receipt of finance from them, go and live with other men and still get the full divorce settlement from their husbands, although their husbands have other children to look after, then I will listen to the hon. Lady. If we are to have no discrimination—it is not possible, because men and women are different and long may it remain so — let us have no discrimination in both directions.

We believe in the market in this party, and we believe in the private sector. The private sector provides pensions, just like the private sector provides insurance. If someone insures a sports car, he pays more because the chances are that he is more likely to have an accident. If he has a red car, he pays more for the insurance, because he has been assessed as being more likely to have an accident. Women live longer than men. If women are to get a better deal on pensions, and there is only a certain amount of money available, it means that men will get a less good deal. That is unfair to men.

It is nonsense. It is against the interests of this country. We will make up our own minds.

11.12 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): The speech of the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was no laughing matter. I wonder where the Conservatives of Northampton, North found the hon. Gentleman. I wonder, too, why, when there is any possibility—there are few —of a debate in the House on equality, it brings out the chauvinistic, not to say sexist, bores in the Conservative party. I hope that television cameras will come into the House soon, so that the behaviour of hon. Members on the Bench below the Gangway will be seen by their constituents. They would not remain here for much longer.

This is a serious matter and I make no apology for taking it seriously, as the Government took it seriously in tabling the motion. It seeks support from the House for the Government's singular failure to implement the Community's first action programme, which began at the end of December last year. Moreover, by endorsing the Government's record and approach to equal treatment, the motion seeks to congratulate a Government who have played a prime role in blocking and obstructing progress and agreement in this area in Europe, and who have obstinately deferred and unnecessarily complicated all practical, progressive measures that have been forced on them by the European courts.

The Minister of State, Home Office, ridiculed us for including

"equal pay for work of equal value"

in our motion. We did that deliberately. That concept was introduced after the Government had been dragged through the European Court and were brought kicking and squealing into this Chamber not wanting to introduce it at all. The Government introduced it in such a complicated and obstructive form that it is almost impossible for women to take claims before the court.

It is important that we support the call for approval and implementation of the directives. If we do not, we cannot be sure that the Government will support the medium-term Community programme for 1986-90. The Government have done hardly anything, in spite of what the Minister said, in the programme for 1982-85. In the introduction of the medium-term programme the Commission noted that the programme can be realised only if it is supported by the "political will" of all the parties, particularly the member states. I have no love for the European Community and I agree with those, including the hon. Member for Northampton, North, who say that we should introduce our own legislation. However, we are not introducing our own legislation. Therefore, we have no other option but to try to bring to the attention of the House the legislation going through other parliaments.

The Government do not have the political will. If they did they would have set out approval of the documents in their motion. Among the 16 actions set out in the 1982-85 programme, the Commission has stressed the importance of adopting the draft directives based on them as a demonstration of that political will and commitment. We all know that the directive on parental leave was emasculated by the Council of Ministers before it ever came to us and, to the eternal shame of the Conservative Benches, it was rejected by the House in November 1985. Not only have the Government refused to adopt the diluted proposals for parental leave, but they have actively withdrawn support for child care and other services for adult or handicapped dependants by restricting local authority and health authority spending.

The other two directives we are asked to underline tonight have already been mentioned. One is about helping the problems of farmers' wives. In my view, that directive does not go far enough, because the families of farmers as well as their wives do much unpaid labour and that should be taken into account. The Commission also calls for the implementation of the directive drawn from action 4, the aim of which was to achieve equal treatment in ocupational social security schemes.

It has not gone unnoticed that the Government have seen fit to point out that equal treatment does not preclude reducing benefits for one sex rather than increasing them for another. The Tory Administration has been an abysmal failure in this policy area. One has only to look at the so-called Fowler review of social security—heralded as the most comprehensive review since Beveridge — the European ruling on the Marshall case, referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and at the Advocate General's guidance on the extension of invalid care allowance for married and cohabiting women.

The Government have disregarded not only the views of the European Commission but the views of their own Equal Opportunities Commission, as well as the views of many distinguished women's groups and organisations throughout the country and in Europe. They have insisted upon retaining and consolidating the breadwinner concept and aggregation, which constitute and perpetuate indirect discrimination against women.

[Ms. Jo Richardson]

Similarly, the Commission's proposal on action point 8, to end discrimination against pregnant women, has been flagrantly flouted by the Government. They have launched an unprecedented attack on all maternity benefits, through the Fowler review and their proposals for so-called reform of statutory maternity allowance.

Strangely, although perhaps not really so strangely, coming from this Government, who have so consistently used equality as a mask for worsening the conditions of women and men—we have only to look at the ill-fated Shops Bill and the Wages Bill—the Government have grasped only one of the action points, and are seeking to abolish protective legislation in the Sex Discrimination Bill, which has been through the House of Lords and is coming to the House shortly. That will worsen the position of women.

It is not surprising that the Government seek to ignore the Commission's better recommendations by merely noting them. They expose the only real strategy that the Government have in relation to women. It is, under the guise of economic necessity, to block all advance and, wherever possible, to undermine existing achievements. I cannot put it better than a paragraph of the 12th report of the Select Committee on European Legislation, on 26 February 1986, which states that the Government

"conclude that any further legislative burdens on employers must be considered in the light of their likely detrimental effect on job creation and hence on equal opportunities, and consequently will seek to ensure that any resolution adopted by the Council contains no unacceptable commitments as to further directives."

In other words, the Government, in the name of lifting so-called burdens from employers, blame equal opportunities for their failure to tackle unemployment. In short, they are making women pay for the failure of their economic policies; it is that economic, social and political fact that our amendment seeks to expose. I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to support me in the Lobby against the Government.

11.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Ian Lang): The debate has ranged wider than the three European Community proposals concerning equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women. Even the three proposals cover the responsibilities of at least three different Government Departments, but I shall try to answer as many of the points that have been raised as I can in the time that remains.

I should like to begin by reaffirming the Government's commitment, as the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) seems to be in some doubt, both to the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women, and to action to help make it a reality. Of course, there is a long way to go, but we have already passed some milestones. Today there are nearly 11 million women economically active in Great Britain, making up some 40 per cent. of the labour force. The United Kingdom has the second highest female labour force participation rate in the European Community after Denmark, with about 60 per cent. of women of working age economically active, as my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said in an excellent speech.

The United Kingdom accounted for more than half the Community's total female employment growth between 1983 and 1984. The number of women in full-time jobs rose by 17,000 in the year to September 1985, and the number in part-time jobs by nearly 180,000.

I think that all hon. Members recognise the Government's achievements in the sphere of training, particularly youth training. The youth training scheme is particularly significant for girls, who have obtained only a tiny share of traditional apprenticeships. In the one-year scheme, for example, 80 per cent. of all young women on the scheme were in employer-led provision, gaining direct experience of industry and commerce. In two-year YTS, with its increased vocational focus, all young people will have the opportunity to acquire a vocational qualification or a credit towards one. That will revolutionise the opportunities which 16-year-old girls leaving school have until now had to obtain such qualifications.

Last December, the Youth Training Board endorsed a package of measures designed to challenge sex-stereotyping in YTS and further encourage girls to consider training opportunities in occupations in which they are under-represented. The package includes encouraging providers to set up single-sex schemes in occupational areas not traditional to women.

The Manpower Services Commission is also promoting equality of opportunity in vocational training in a number of other ways. For example, it is currently involved in the programme of "Women's Training Roadshows" touring the country under the auspices of the Women's National Commission. The roadshows are exhibitions aimed at encouraging girls and women to consider careers not traditionally associated with their sex, particularly science and technology-related careers.

The hon. Member for Battersea referred to the bus that set off from Westminster on Monday. I helped to send that bus off under the auspices of the WISE scheme—women into science and engineering. There is also a scheme known as WOW intended to give wider opportunities for women. The Government are also bringing forward the Sex Discrimination Bill which will shortly come to the House for Second Reading. We have also, of course, supported the Equal Opportunities Commission's code of practice of 1985.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) referred to women's pay and complained that insufficient progress was being made towards equalisation of pay rates. She might like to know that average weekly earnings for full-time adult employees since 1979 have risen by 93 per cent. for men and for women by 99 per cent. There is a divergence of 6 per cent. at a time when the inflation rate rose by some 75 per cent.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley also referred to the Helen Marshall case. Of course, if the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, brought in by a Labour Government, had provided for equality in retirement, Miss Marshall would never have had to resort to the European Court.

Mrs. Clwyd: This is 1986. Where has the Minister been in the meantime?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Lady also referred to the United Kingdom blocking the occupational pensions directive. I must tell the hon. Lady that we are not blocking that directive. The approach adopted by the Government, and outlined in their explanatory memorandum, commands considerable support among other member states. It offers the best hope of securing a directive. Also, we are not

blocking the directive on the self-employed. There is certainly disagreement over some of the provisions that it contains from a number of countries, but we hope that a suitable draft can be achieved. We are simply trying to amend those aspects which are unworkable.

Special training for women is being offered by an increasing number of institutions which my colleagues and I have designated under section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 which allows training to be restricted to one sex only where it is for work in which members of that sex are seriously under-represented or where the trainees have been out of the labour market for some time discharging domestic or family responsibilities. To date, some 150 bodies have received such designation —all but one of them since the Government came to power. In 1985, the United Kingdom topped the European league for women's training, with 92 projects obtaining social fund money. Second came Italy with 13 projects.

With regard to the parental leave directive, to which the Opposition"s amendment referred, of course the Government recognise that domestic responsibilities are a constraint on pursuing a career for many women, at least for a time. But reconciling child care with employment is not a problem to which there is a single solution suitable to be imposed by legislation. Indeed, there are a number of possible solutions, and parental leave itself is only a temporary and partial one.

The Opposition amendment also referred to the equal pay for work of equal value directive, to which the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) also referred. I cannot understand what the Opposition mean in the amendment when they draw attention to the Government's obstruction to equal pay for work of equal value. The Government amended the Equal Pay Act 1970 in 1983 to provide for equal pay for work of equal value following the judgment of the European Court of Justice. The original Act, which was introduced by the Labour Government, did not fully implement European law on that matter. I stress that the Opposition did not choose to include the concept of equal value in the Act that they introduced in 1970.

The Opposition are in no position to criticise the Government. The same story applies if we consider the invalid care allowance. That is currently the subject of a reference to the European Court of Justice to ascertain whether the EEC directive on equal treatment in social security matters applies to that allowance.

We have not yet received the court's judgment—it is expected next month—but the Government have made their position quite clear. We have a good record in complying with the directive and in removing discrimination from schemes — discrimination which was often introduced by the previous Labour Government, as was the exclusion of married women from the invalid care allowance. We have often gone further than the strict terms of the directive.

Equal treatment for men and women in occupational pensions is a principle which few would argue against. There can be as little justification for inequality here as in any other area of economic activity where men and women work side by side, but there is a basic problem in applying the principle of equal treatment to occupational pensions. It is to decide what "equality" means. There is no shortage of opinion and assertion on the question; some of it is informed and some of it is expert, but, regrettably, much of it is neither.

Our approach to the discussions that have taken place

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, Mr. Deputy Speaker *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted Business), That the amendment be made:—*

The House divided: Ayes 82, Noes 157.

Division No. 180] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Godman, Dr Norman
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Wallace, James
Welsh, Michael

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Chris Smith.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony

Eggar, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, John
Marlow, Antony
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitfield, John
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put and agreed to.
Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 6871/83, draft proposals for a Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of men and women in occupational social security schemes, 5825/1/84, draft Directive on the application of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in self employed occupations including agriculture and on protection during pregnancy and maternity, and 4118/86, communication from the Commission to the Council concerning a medium term Community programme (1986/90) on equal opportunities for women; and endorses the Government's commitment to the principle of equal treatment while seeking to ensure that unnecessary burdens are not imposed on business in the United Kingdom.

LIAISON

Resolved,

That Sir Richard Body be added to the Liaison Committee. —*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

PRIVILEGES

Resolved,

That Mr. David Steel be discharged from the Committee of Privileges and Mr. A. J. Beith be added to the Committee.— *[Mr. Boscawen.]*

PETITIONS

Social Security Reform

11.42 pm

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kempton): With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that of the House, I wish to present a petition on behalf of about 1,000 people, most of whom live in Brighton.

The petition states:

That legislation based on the "Reform of Social Security—Programme for Action" White Paper would be extremely detrimental to the residents of the United Kingdom who are in receipt of social security benefits.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House do not pass legislation arising out of the "Reform of Social Security" White Paper.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will every pray.

To lie upon the Table.

11.44 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that of the House, I wish to present a petition similar to that presented by the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) from the Springburn Elderly Forum about social security reform. The forum was formed recently and consists of senior citizens who are fighting to ensure that the pensioners' case is put properly to Parliament and to everyone who is responsible for their welfare. It gives elderly people the opportunity to discuss their problems.

The petition has in excess of 2,000 signatures, and was organised by Mrs. Rose MacCallum of 85 Broomknowles road in my constituency. The petition is against the White Paper for the reform of social security, and states:

"The Humble Petition of the Residents of the Constituency of Glasgow, Springburn Sheweth That the proposed changes in Social Security Benefits would be harmful to the people of this country.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House reject these proposals. And your Petitioners, as in duty bound will ever pray &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Board and Lodging Regulations (Midlothian)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

11.45 pm

Mr. Alex Eadie (Midlothian): The subject of the debate — the operation of the board and lodging regulations in Midlothian—is causing great anxiety in my constituency. It is fair to say that that anxiety is widespread throughout the country.

The problem I face as a constituency Member for Parliament arises from statutory instrument No. 613, driven through the House by the Government's majority last year, entitled "Supplementary Benefit Regulations 1985". It is commonly referred to as board and lodging allowances, and I wish to discuss its effect on the elderly in 24-hour care in registered nursing homes.

The problem with payments arose when the Government introduced new restrictions on DHSS payments. We were told that they were aimed at the so-called Costa del Dole—young people living in coastal towns. However, they also set a new limit of £170 a week on payment of nursing home fees.

Even on the later aspect, it is claimed that the order is defective. It is not a new experience for this Government to find their orders defective. Indeed, they have been brought before the courts to be told so.

The bitter experience that I shall relate to the House should give the Minister and his Government great cause for concern. The Minister is aware of the case that I shall describe at this late hour, and the time available compels me to do so in shorthand. It concerns a woman of 95, Mrs. Agnes Scott, formerly resident in Parthhead, Midlothian, but now resident in a nursing home. She is severely disabled and confined to a wheelchair. The medical evidence describes her as frail, suffering from dementia and osteoarthritis, and says that she requires full-time nursing care. I hope that the Minister will at least have the grace to agree with those medical facts.

I must pay the highest compliment to Mrs. Agnes Scott's grandson, Mr. H. Leonard Scott, who has campaigned for justice for his grandmother. I do so deliberately because he gives the lie to what is abroad nowadays—that children, or grandchildren, show lack of concern for their parents or grandparents. Mr. Scott has been a tower of strength to his mother, who is a pensioner and has been seriously ill. She is worried sick about what will happen to her 95-year-old mother. Lest there be any doubt about the role that she has played in looking after her mother, I want the record to show that for 16 years she cared for her mother until her own health broke down. Only reluctantly, under the pressure of medical advice, did she consent to her mother being cared for in a nursing home. Mrs. Agnes Scott's daughter was in no position to choose any particular establishment for her mother, because she herself had been hospitalised for eight months.

The statutory instrument sets a limit of £170 a week on payments for nursing home fees for the elderly and disabled. I regret to say that I was given deplorable advice by the Minister in a letter. He wrote that charity should be asked to make up the shortfall between the limit and the fees. That was his response when I wrote him about the

[Mr. Alex Eadie]

case of 95-year-old Mrs. Agnes Scott, who has lived in Hilton Lodge nursing home since 1 October 1984. It is suitable for her needs and she is perfectly happy there. If she were removed on the ground of cost, the consequences would be fatal for her. The Minister has had a letter from me to tell him that his charity advice offers no solution to the problem.

In the Minister's letter of 8 April he asserted that Mrs. Scott is in the nursing home that charges the highest fees. My response demonstrates that that is not true. He has been given the figures and I hope that he will concede that the information given in his letter of 8 April is misinformation.

The feature that bedevils Mrs. Agnes Scott's case is that she has a decision in her favour arising from a tribunal decision of 21 February 1986. I shall quote the judgment in its totality because it has a bearing on what I want to say about the regulations. The judgment reads:

"The Tribunal considered Regulation 9 of the Requirement Regulations and Schedule 1(A) and 2f which gives the figure of £138·60 per week ie the prescribed rate. This prescribed rate is now £170 a week as Mrs. Scott was paying £190 a week prior to 29.4.85 This became the protected rate. The majority held the view that it was her tenancy in the suitable nursing home which was protected and this would take into account any reasonable weekly increase, and in this case the weekly increase of £9·50 a week was reasonable in that it was less than the rate of inflation this was what 'protected' meant in the meaning of the Act and word."

To give a fair picture, I should add that the dissenting member held that the tribunal had to take account of what the Act said, not what the tribunal thought that it intended to say. He maintained that the £190 per week was protected, not any subsequent weekly increase, however resonable.

There is no decision in regard to inflation, which reveals the defectiveness of the Act. The adjudication officer has challenged the legality of the tribunal's finding and is appealing to the social security commissioners. The tribunal's decision is frozen, and poor Mrs. Scott and her relatives are left to sweat it out.

Many of my constituents are puzzled. They believe that Parliament makes the laws and that, if a law is defective or in doubt, Parliament hastens to clarify it. If I had more time, I could give examples of defective unfair and unjust legislation that Parliament has remedied. When the statutory instrument was debated in November 1984—it was imposed in April 1985—the Secretary of State for Social Services gave the House the assurance that there was no question of elderly handicapped or disabled people being moved out of their existing accommodation and that their position would be protected.

The Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), was asked in a radio interview last July whether the limits were not putting on families the onus of paying for nursing homes. He replied:

"We are definitely not. People are saying that because they are misinformed."

The 95-year-old lady has a daughter who is herself on a pension. She cannot maintain her mother. At great personal sacrifice, she has attempted to buy her mother what can be called the basic necessities.

The statements that I have quoted do not tally with the history of the case. Ministers must be held accountable for what they say. It is a serious matter if they have deceived Parliament. The Minister has some explaining to do, although other Ministers should be at the Dispatch Box to explain.

Real compassion for 95-year-old Mrs. Agnes Scott is alive in my constituency, but there is also anger that the Government do not seem to match it. Her grandson asked me whether his grandmother would be murdered by a parliamentay statutory instrument, because that was what it would mean if she were moved from Hilton Lodge. I could not answer the question. Can the Minister answer it tonight? The answer is anxiously awaited by the Scott family, by many other elderly people throughout Scotland and by Age Concern Scotland which reads our proceedings on behalf of its many elderly citizens.

12 midnight

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): I must say immediately that compassion does not merely rest in Midlothian or, indeed, on the Opposition Benches, although I appreciate that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) did not suggest that. The welfare of the elderly and the disadvantaged are matters of concern to us all, and I shall seek to deal with the issue.

I am exceedingly familiar with the case from which the hon. Gentleman drew a great deal of his text. He will know that the tribunal judgment is at present the subject of an appeal, and it would be unwise and improper for me to trespass on that matter. I appreciate that the charges relating to other homes are a relatively minor matter, but the hon. Gentleman has slightly incomplete information, and he may find that, for that innocent reason, he has been misled.

The hon. Gentleman will know that it has long been an established practice under both Governments that the details of individual cases of this nature tend not to be discussed on the Floor of the House. However, I am perfectly happy to meet him privately at any time to discuss the matter. He has only to ask for us to have a conversation about the particular details of Mrs. Scott. I make that offer now, as I would have done previously, had he approached me requesting such a meeting at any time in the past.

Mr. Eadie: The Minister should not deceive the House with that offer. I will accept any offer from a Minister to meet and discuss any case. He should be fair to the House and admit that I received an answer to my letter only when I tabled a question asking when I would receive a reply. That does not show any sense of urgency or co-operation on the part of the Minister.

Mr. Major: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to be contentious, I am prepared to meet him. I was endeavouring to make him a realistic, civilised offer because I am not prepared to swap the details of a lady's particular difficulties across the Floor of the House. That would be neither proper nor appropriate and I will not do it, whatever the provocation may be. I am prepared to discuss the matter with the hon. Gentleman, and that was the point that I was making to him.

I must commiserate with the hon. Gentleman about the timing of the debate. As the collective House is aware, although the hon. Gentleman did not mention it this evening, we have been reviewing the supplementary benefit limits for all forms of board and lodging, including

those for people in homes and hostels. We shall shortly be announcing the outcome of that review, and obviously, I cannot anticipate it. I must confine my remarks to the present arrangements, although I am acutely aware of the difficulties facing some elderly people, and we have paid special attention to them. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that.

It may be helpful to put the matter in a proper context if I remind the house briefly of the background to the changes we made last year. That was noticably absent from the hon. Gentleman's remarks. Our changes had three aims in respect of both ordinary board and lodgings, to which there was a passing reference, and residential and nursing homes in Lothian and elselwhere.

The first of those aims was to gain control of very rapidly escalating expenditure. I shall return to that point later. The second was to target expenditure more precisely on those in real need, and the third was to help to curb undoubted abuse in some—although, of course, not all —areas. We were also concerned that, with the easy availability of high boarder payments, the benefit system was, in effect, acting as an artificial stimulus to the market, resulting in some cases of exploitation and waste. I emphasise "some", because I am not making a more general charge. It is not a matter of dispute between us that that was a genuine problem—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman had a great deal to say earlier. He might do me the courtesy of listening in the time remaining, so that he cannot at some later stage say that I did not respond to his points.

The hon. Gentleman expressed concern about people in homes. That has to be seen in the context of the Government's very good record in recent years. Since the Conservative party took office in 1979 we have enabled many thousands more people to opt for the residential care of their choice, and that is continuing. The hon. Gentleman talked of compassion, but a sharp contrast can be drawn between us and the Labour Government. He did not mention the fact that, under that Government, supplementary benefit was only rarely sufficient to meet the charges incurred by elderly people in homes. I fear that he overlooked that point.

The 1979 supplementary benefits handbook explained just how little could be paid then. Local limits were set by reference to

"the highest charge a short-term claimant might be obliged to pay to find full board and lodging in commercial establishments of a reasonable standard".

In other words, the amounts payable were geared to short-term unemployed claimants, not to the needs of the elderly and the disabled. There has been a material change in that respect.

People in need of residential or nursing care had very little choice at that time. Those who could not pay privately had to rely on local authorities to provide accommodation, or they filled the long-stay wards of National Health Service hospitals. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that in many cases hard-pressed families felt that they had to cope as best they could in difficult circumstances. I am not tonight arguing that the present system is perfect in all respects. Clearly there are difficulties with it. But, with all its difficulties, the present system is infinitely better than that. That point must be made so that people view policy in the round.

The Government changed the benefit rules so as to open up the option of care in the independent sector. That should be remembered, as it is important to many people in this country. The figures speak for themselves. In 1978, 7,000 supplementary benefit claimants were assisted with their fees in residential care and nursing homes. By 1984, the estimated figure was a six-fold increase, to 42,000. Expenditure has gone up even more. In 1978, £6 million was spent in that area; by 1983 expenditure had reached £105 million and by 1984 it was estimated to be £190 million. That was a quite staggering increase, but it was justifiable, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman welcomed it.

It has never been the Government's intention to supplant the valuable role of local or health authorities in this area. Indeed, we are discussing with them how collaboration can be improved. There are grey areas of difficulty between their role and the role of supplementary benefit. I regret, although I understand the point, that a number of authorities took the increases in benefit entitlement as a cue to cease sponsoring claimants in residential care. Nationally, the number of people sponsored by local authorities in private and voluntary homes has been declining although the numbers in homes have tended to increase.

That picture is mirrored in Lothian. In 1980, there were 544 people sponsored in the Lothian area. By 1985, that figure had fallen to 427. I understand that this trend is likely to increase in future. I should reiterate that local authorities still retain their rights and responsibilities in this area—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is always trying to make political points. The situation is precisely the same in many areas in which the Labour party is in control, and he should acknowledge that.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Give us the figures.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman will get the figures if he tables a question. We are discussing Lothian, and nominally at least, the hon. Gentleman is not, as far as I am aware, part of the debate. If he so wished, he could have indicated in the normal way that he wanted to take part in the debate. From the way in which the hon. Gentleman has intervened, it is becoming apparent that the debate has as much to do with party politics as with anything else.

Mr. Eadie: On a point of Order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I resent the fact that the Minister, in an Adjournment debate granted to an hon. Member, has acted in such an arrogant manner. He has been given 14 minutes out of 30 minutes to reply to the debate. Let us have a little less arrogance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. That is not a point of order, as the hon. Member knows.

Mr. Major: It certainly was not a point of order. It was one of the most ludicrous interventions that I have heard in my few years as a Member of the House. I assume that the hon. Gentleman would like an answer, although there seems to be some question about that.

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Gentleman had 14 minutes in which to reply.

Mr. Major: It is a jolly sight less, with the interruptions and mutterings from the hon. Member for Midlothian and his Front Bench colleague, the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing). One begins to wonder whether the hon. Gentleman wants a reply.

[Mr. Major]

Although the changes in the supplementary benefit rules since 1980 brought many advantages, the system did not always work fairly. For example, the amount of supplementary benefit for people in residential care homes varied substantially from place to place—from £51 to £215 a week. Nursing home limits, which, admittedly, were more relevant to Mrs. Scott, varied between £80 and £295 a week. Because limits were set locally by adjudication officers by reference to charges actually levied, they were susceptible to manipulation by the more unscrupulous proprietors. Excessive profits were made at the taxpayer's expense, and value for money was not always given. In other circumstances, the hon. Gentleman would have been the first person to criticise that trend, although he has offered precious little support to the Government in trying to curb it.

No responsible Government could ignore such problems, and last year we took steps to deal with them. We replaced the old local limits with a new, more consistent structure of national limits which varied according to the category of home—for elderly people, those who were handicapped, and so on. The limits operated in progressive steps to meet the anticipated cost of providing an appropriate level of care. The new limits were specifically intended to allow reasonable charges to be met in homes satisfying the registration requirements. Last November, we increased those limits by £10 for residential care homes and by a substantial £31·40 for nursing homes. That was another material fact that slipped the hon. Gentleman's mind when he addressed the House earlier.

The limits for residential care homes now range from £120 to £180 a week. While the limits for nursing homes range from £170—as the hon. Gentleman mentioned—to £230 a week. Those new limits were substantially higher than those they superseded in some places and for a large number of people. In other cases, they were lower. The hon. Gentleman expressed concern about the position of people already in homes charging above the current limit when the changes were made. For those people, we provided unprecedentedly extensive transitional arrangements, which were described not by Ministers but by the Social Security Advisory Committee as generous. People over pension age had their existing level of benefit protected until such time as payment under the new rules became more favourable to them.

That was the extent and nature of transitional protection. It was precisely on all fours with the nature of transitional protection at all times since we have had a social security system — whatever party has been in power. There is nothing novel about the way that transitional protection worked. People under pension age were protected for a year until April 1986 to give them time to make alternative arrangements. There was provision to extend the protected period where exceptional hardship would otherwise result.

In keeping with all precedents under Governments of both parties no provision was made to increase the transitionally protected amounts to meet fresh increases in fees. The hon. Gentleman suggested that that was harsh but, as I said a moment ago, it is not my intention to discuss Mrs. Scott's case across the Floor of the House. In the moments left to me, I reiterate, although I wanted to say much more, that I will be happy to meet the hon. Gentleman to discuss the case and the wider application of the board and lodging rules, if he so wishes. That is an open offer to him.

I should like to say that the Government's intention, in their care for the elderly and the disabled, was to make the transitional protection provision as generous and as flexible as possible. I know that Mrs. Scott's grandson felt differently, but people do retain the same level of protection if they move to another home, although no one can receive more than the actual charge that they are required to pay. The logic of the hon. Gentleman's position can only be that any fees that proprietors choose to impose should be met, whatever their level. I am pleased to put it on record that the hon. Member for Falkirk, East shakes his head. *[Interruption.]* I did not say that the hon. Member for Midlothian said that. That is the logic of what he said. I am pleased to have it on record that it is not the Labour party's policy that any fee increase of any sort should be met. That is an important——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock on Wednesday evening and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at fifteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 15 May 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 22 May.

MILFORD HAVEN PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [18 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed Thursday 22 May.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [24 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed Thursday 22 May.

HARWICH PARKESTON QUAY BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [28 April], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed Thursday 22 May.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Interest Rates

1. **Mr. Andy Stewart** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

8. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect his Budget has had upon the level of interest rates.

9. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the present level of interest rates.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): Base rates have been reduced by 2 per cent. since the Budget.

Mr. Stewart: I thank my right hon. Friend for that continuing good news about the economy, particularly as it benefits the Exchequer, industry and mortgage payers. However, at what level would interest rates be if the Labour party implemented its £24 billion of expenditure?

Mr. Lawson: If it were to implement the extra £24 billion of public expenditure we would have substantial increases in taxation, possibly a VAT rate of 41 per cent., excessive borrowing, interest rates much higher than they are today, and no doubt before very long we would be in the hands of the IMF.

Mr. Ottaway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a survey carried out among business men by the Nottinghamshire chamber of commerce showed that what concerned them most was high interest rates? With, I hope, inflation following West Germany down to zero, resulting in high real interest rates, will he please do whatever possible to bring interest rates down as soon as possible to try to alleviate the fears of those Nottinghamshire business men?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. It is important that interest rates should be brought down as much and as soon as is prudent. The 2 per cent. reduction in interest rates already since the Budget has been accompanied by a reduction in the mortgage interest rate of 1¾ per cent., which will come into effect on 1 June, which, on its own, is worth some £3·60 a week to the man or family with the average outstanding mortgage.

Mr. Hayes: Now that Cabinet government has been restored, that we have a balanced ticket and that the winds of change are sweeping through the Treasury, will my right hon. Friend accept that any relaxation of the rules governing the spending of capital receipts by local authorities from council house sales would not significantly affect interest rates?

Mr. Lawson: No, my hon. Friend is wrong. That could have an effect on interest rates. However, I am glad to see from the earlier part of his question that he appears to be fully content with the present state of affairs.

Mr. Penhaligon: When, within the strategy currently being pursued, does the Chancellor expect British interest rates to be as much below the international average as they are currently above it?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that our level of interest rates is higher than the general level in major countries overseas. The relationship between interest rates in Britain and overseas is not unconnected with the fact that labour costs per unit of output are rising much faster in Britain than in our major competitors. That is the major weakness in the British economy at present, and it is a job for management to take a better grip of its costs. We shall then be able to see benefits in competitiveness and in interest rates as well.

Mr. Evans: If interest rates are falling so well and everything in the garden is so wonderful, why does unemployment continue to increase? I cite the announcement this week that 1,000 jobs will be lost at Kodak, that another 1,000 jobs will go at British Caledonian, and, as we heard yesterday, the appalling loss of 3,500 redundancies in the shipbuilding industry.

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman should have listened a little more attentively to my answer to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) a moment ago. Unemployment is all part of the same problem. Labour costs per unit of output are increasing far too quickly in this country, which prices workers in many of our industries out of jobs, as we are not as competitive as our rivals overseas.

Mr. Latham: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the welcome reduction in interest and mortgage rates will at least do something to offset the deplorable increase in domestic and commercial rates imposed by Labour and Liberal councils, including in our county of Leicester?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right about the county of Leicester, which both he and I represent. There is considerable unrest about the level of rates imposed by the Labour-controlled council. The same problem exists in much of the country. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks about the considerable benefits to the economy as a result of the Budget and the consequent reduction in interest rates.

Dr. McDonald: By exactly how much will bank interest rates in Britain have to be cut if they are to fall to the same level as real interest rates in America, Japan, France and Germany, our main competitors?

Mr. Lawson: Although it is difficult to measure precisely or accurately real interest rates, they are slightly higher in this country than in most other major countries. A Labour Government might considerably reduce real interest rates in the same way as always—by letting inflation go through the roof.

Freeports

2. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to receive a report from the appointed consultants about reviewing the customs and tax regulations covering freeports; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Peter Brooke): The consultants were appointed in July 1984 to undertake a five-year research study to enable an initial evaluation of the freeport experiment. Annual progress reports submitted by the consultants to date include assessments of the problems which have arisen in the operation of freeports.

Mr. Colvin: That is a long time to have to wait. Is my hon. Friend aware that the experiment is unlikely to prove successful unless he does something to get the Customs and Excise off the backs of the freeports? Some of us believe that the Customs and Excise was determined to ensure that the experiment failed before it even started. The freeports need to be wholly free of VAT. In some instances, the VAT regime inside the freeport is even worse than that outside it, which is hardly a recipe for success.

Mr. Brooke: I must rebut my hon. Friend's contention about the Customs and Excise. It has not changed any of the rules that were set out at the beginning of the freeports experiment. Freeports remain subject to European Community legislation. On the subject of consultants, there will shortly be an interim report.

Unemployment (Budget Effects)

3. **Mr. Kilroy-Silk** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the effect of the Budget on unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): While it is impossible to isolate the direct effect of the Budget, or indeed of any Budget, on unemployment, the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that nearly 1 million additional new jobs have been created since the last election.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Is it not a disgrace that with more than 4 million people unemployed so little attention was given to job creation in the Budget statement? Does that now show the Government's callous and uncaring nature? I can point to hundreds of people in my constituency and on Merseyside who have lost their jobs since the Budget statement. How many people can the Minister point to who have found jobs?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the figures is not——

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: How many?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's questions. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the figure is not 4 million. The figure could amount to that only if he included the people in employment through various job creation measures. The Budget added considerably to the already very high total of expenditure being incurred on job creation, employment and training measures. When we took office the figure was under £400 million. By the end of these three years it will be £3 billion, which is a clear indication of the priority that we give this subject.

Mr. Forman: Is not the level of unemployment, both now and in the future, affected at least as much by unit labour costs, as was pointed out by our right hon. Friend earlier? Therefore, would it not be sensible to press ahead as rapidly as possible with schemes to make pay more profit-related, since that might help to redress some of the problem?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is entirely right to draw attention again to the problem of unit labour costs, where the position is, if anything, deteriorating. I hope that employers and employees will take into account that

very important part of job creation — the Budget measures which reduced income tax for employees, which in many cases considerably increases their take-home pay.

My hon. Friend knows that we are engaging in discussions on profit sharing. I hope that that, too, will help to reduce unit labour costs.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister recall that it was to encourage entrepreneurs to create jobs that the top rate of income tax was reduced from 84 to 60 per cent.? Will he set up a study to investigate whether a single job has been created by that?

Mr. MacGregor: It is clear that the whole series of tax measures, not just the one referred to by the hon. Gentleman, designed to encourage job creation and small business development have worked. The number of new businesses starting up and expanding has been very creditable under this Government compared with the record in the past, and is a major contributor to jobs.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Will my right hon. Friend take up with employer organisations his disappointment over the fact that many firms prefer to increase the wages of existing employees by more than the rate of inflation, rather than take on additional staff? Does he agree that, by international standards, our performance in that respect is poor and is making unemployment worse?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is putting the unit labour cost argument in another way. I agree with him that this practice does not help unemployment. It is important that all employers take note of the arguments. I pay tribute to the work of the CBI, which is tryng to get across that message, as we do in everything that we say.

Mr. Mason: Will the Minister answer the simple question embodied in the original question? What figure can he give for a reduction in the dole queues as a result of the last Budget?

Mr. MacGregor: The last Budget was not very long ago — [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] The right hon. Gentleman must recognise that there have been increases in net new jobs in this country on a scale greater than in the remainder of western Europe put together as a result of the last three Budgets and the policies that we have been pursuing.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the effect on employment cannot be considered in isolation from the basis on which the unemployment figures are calculated? For example, the severely disabled and single-parent families can be included in unemployment figures, as can people over 60, who sign on simply to obtain their national insurance tax credits. Figures that include such people cannot be treated as an accurate reflection of unemployment.

Mr. MacGregor: It is clear that some people are included in the unemployment figures—and there have been various calculations of the number—who are not actively seeking work.

Mr. Terry Davis: Will the Chief Secretary confirm that his figure of 1 million new jobs since 1983 includes about 250,000 second jobs—second jobs obtained by people who already have jobs; second jobs that are often part-time jobs? Is it not true that there are still 1 million fewer people in employment today than there were in 1979, even allowing for everything that has happened since 1983?

As the Minister has referred to the rest of Europe, will he confirm that, under this Government, Britain has not only lost more jobs since 1979 than any other member the Common Market, but has lost more jobs than all the other countries in the Common Market added together?

Mr. MacGregor: There are some people in the figures —we do not know yet how many, but the number will be small and not on the scale suggested—who have two jobs. We shall eventually discover the number when the surveys have been completed. That does not diminish the fact that there has been a substantial increase in the number of people—the figure is close to the number of net new jobs—who are new to the work force. I do not know why the hon. Gentleman keeps criticising the Government for the number of new jobs that are part-time jobs. Part-time jobs will always have a major contribution to make to the economy. It is interesting to observe that part-time jobs contributed to more than half the increase in the number of jobs under the previous Labour Government.

Personal Equity Plans

4. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the proposed establishment of personal equity plans.

Mr. Lawson: A considerable number, most of which have warmly welcomed the proposal.

Mr. Freeman: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that since 1979, when the Government came into power, the proportion of the population owning shares has doubled from 7 to 14 per cent.? Will he accept that this has been a substantial achievement? As we are now to have personal equity plans, does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be reasonable to aim for 20 per cent. of the population to own shares, which is close to the percentage in the United States?

Mr. Lawson: Yes. The most recent survey conducted by National Opinion Poll showed that the proportion of adults directly owning shares has doubled since 1979 along the lines that my hon. Friend suggested. This has arisen largely as a result of two factors. First, there has been a sharp growth in employee share schemes. Secondly, there has been the Government's privatisation programme, especially British Telecom. We are now adding a third leg to what will become a tripod with the introduction of personal equity plans, which, as I said in my earlier answers, have had a warm welcome throughout the community.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Chancellor accept that personal equity plans would be even more widely and enthusiastically accepted and welcomed if they gave greater incentives than are at present planned? Does he accept also that the great prize for British industry would be to have an agreement which extended across the political parties on this scheme and on the right hon. Gentleman's profit-sharing scheme, which we very much welcome, which he introduced at the NEDC on Monday? Will he incorporate in the discussions on these matters not only both sides of industry but the other parties?

Mr. Lawson: I shall always be happy to listen to representations from the hon. Gentleman and from anyone

else before the scheme finally comes into full operation on 1 January 1987. I am glad to know that the hon. Gentleman welcomes the tax concessions under the personal equity plan of complete freedom from income tax on dividends and of capital gains tax on disposals, proposals which were never put into play under the previous Labour Government, of whom the hon. Gentleman was such an avid supporter.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer recall that after the findings of the National Opinion Poll were published it was suggested by many, and reported, that the increase in share owners from 7 to 14 per cent. arose because there had been a lot of double counting? Will he confirm that the greatest increase of share ownership that has taken place pro rata is in the Government and the Cabinet itself, with nine members of the Cabinet owning shares and with the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Transport leading the way by making money out of the coal strike and privatisation, only to be superseded by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), who represents Barclays Bank in this place?

Mr. Lawson: I regret that I was not able to hear much of what the hon. Gentleman said. Modern Cabinets may be rather large, but to suggest that they account for 14 per cent. of the adult population of Great Britain is going a little far.

Mr. Tim Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the refinements to the scheme, which were announced by the Treasury this week to include unit trusts, are very welcome? Who is to issue the plans if the Financial Services Bill does not become law by 1 January of next year, which seems likely?

Mr. Lawson: It is important that the Financial Services Bill should become law by 1 January next year, as I am sure my hon. Friend agrees. If that were not so, special arrangements would have to be in force for the interim period.

Gold Reserves

5. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the value of the United Kingdom's gold reserves.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): $6·1 billion.

Mr. Brown: As there seem to be some goodies in the kitty, despite the recession, would this be an opportune time to return Albania's gold to its rightful owners—the Albanian Government? Must we not face that issue?

Mr. Stewart: I should explain to the hon. Gentleman that the figure for which he asked and the answer which I gave related to the United Kingdom's gold reserves. His question on Albania relates to gold that is held on behalf of the Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold, in which the United States, the United Kingdom and France are joint participants.

Mr. John Browne: Does my hon. Friend accept that the question of gold reserves has been brought into stark focus by the enormous increase in the number of financial instruments and the financial pyramiding involved, and by the vast increase in trading volume throughout the world? The question arises as to the implications for the financial community of any failure of settlement. Is it not prudent for the Government to increase their gold reserves at such a time?

Mr. Stewart: Total reserves have been increasing. In fact, in the past few months there has been a rise on every occasion. We judge the present balance between gold and convertible currency to be about right in present circumstances.

Public Expenditure

6. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest projection for public expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product in 1986-87.

Mr. MacGregor: The latest estimate of general Government expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product for 1986-87 is 42½ per cent.

Mr. Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we are by no means achieving full value for our existing public expenditure on health and education? Although it is far from certain that a more relaxed approach to public expenditure would produce better public services, we know all too well from experience that it would lead to higher taxes, higher interest rates and higher unemployment. Will my right hon. Friend underline that truth to the alliance parties, which want to spend an extra £10 billion, and to the Liberal party in Warwickshire, which proposed a rate increase of 23·3 per cent. and more? I am happy to say that those Liberals failed to impress the electorate.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend was correct in the first part of his question. That is why, in addition to establishing priorities in public expenditure, we are concentrating so much on getting value for money in all the programmes. I am sure my hon. Friend will be pleased to know that, as a result of efforts in obtaining value for money in the Health Service, about £150 million a year extra has been devoted to real front-line care. We must continue with such an approach. My hon. Friend was entirely right in the second part of his question. As we saw under the last Labour Government, those were precisely the consequences, and they would be repeated under the proposals put forward by the Liberals and the SDP.

Mr. Madden: How much is it costing the Government to sustain record unemployment?

Mr. MacGregor: The figures for unemployment benefit are in the public expenditure White Paper. If there is ever-increasing public expenditure, it has to be paid for in other ways, which loses real, permanent jobs elsewhere.

European Monetary System

7. **Mr. Knox** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next proposes to have discussions with the European Community Council of Ministers about the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Aspects of the European monetary system come up for discussion from time to time.

Mr. Knox: Can my hon. Friend think of more suitable circumstances than those that obtain at present for Britain to join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS? If not, why do we not join?

Mr. Stewart: We have always made it clear that we see both advantages and disadvantages in membership of the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS. We keep it under review. We would need to be satisfied that there was a clear balance of advantage before joining.

Mr. Meadowcroft: What is the right basis on which we should join the EMS?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman makes a fundamental mistake in assuming that membership of the ERM is determined solely on the basis of prevailing rates of exchange between sterling and other currencies. A range of other matters, such as volatility and the technical arrangements of the mechanism itself, must be taken into account.

Mr. Budgen: When my hon. Friend has an opportunity to speak to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, will he tell him that it would be a good thing if he told his many friends among the fashionable economic commentators that the Prime Minister's opposition in principle to joining the EMS is neither eccentric nor isolated, and that many hon. Members on both sides of the House would deeply resent the loss of national sovereignty that would occur if we were to join?

Mr. Stewart: I note what my hon. Friend has said and, if I get an opportunity to see my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, I shall pass on his remarks. My hon. Friend's question and the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) illustrate the fact that people can hold different opinions on this matter.

Mr. Evans: When the Minister next meets his European colleagues to discuss European matters, especially the ecu, will he inform them of the Chancellor's new-found enthusiasm for profit-sharing by employees as part of their wages? Will the hon. Gentleman inform his European colleagues that the Government are prepared to accept the modest Vredeling proposals on employees having the right to information about their companies?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman's question is rather far from the question of the European monetary system. However, I am glad that he has some words of approval for my right hon. Friend's profit-sharing proposals.

Mr. Dorrell: If, as my hon. Friend said, there are advantages and disadvantages in joining the EMS, what is the critical disadvantage that keeps us out of it, and therefore keeps our currency fluctuating, in preference to a sound, stable currency at a fixed rate against the currencies of our major European partners?

Mr. Stewart: Two or three months ago I went into these questions at some length in a debate in the House, and I shall gladly do so again outside the Chamber with my hon. Friend. Clearly, in considering the EMS, we must recognise that joining would not be an easy option. My hon. Friend's point about the movement of the exchange rate between sterling and the continental currencies is only part of the picture. It is a mechanism, and a number of its aspects must be taken into account.

Income Tax

10. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the proportion of income tax revenue paid by the 10 per cent. of taxpayers with the highest incomes; and what was the comparable proportion in 1979-80.

Mr. MacGregor: The proportion is 37½ per cent. in 1986-87, compared with 34 per cent. in 1979-80.

Mr. Sackville: Is that proportion not further evidence that the sky-high tax rates of the last Government were counter-productive and that our reductions in those rates produced a greater, not a smaller, tax yield, to the benefit not only of high rate taxpayers but taxpayers in general?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right. It demonstrates what we have always said — that lower taxes provide encouragement and motivation leading to greater earnings and hence to greater achievement. As my hon. Friend has implied, that is in sharp contrast to the Labour party's policies. It is fairly clear that at the moment the Labour party simply cannot add up the figures. Recently, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) made a speech in which he said that people earning more than £30,000 a year would have to pay more tax. Just to get anywhere near the yield that the right hon. Gentleman seeks would mean total confiscation of earning over £30,000 a year. It is hard to say how that encourages motivation or provides greater tax yields.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that, once again, the right hon. Gentleman misrepresents the figures? *[Interruption.]* He knows that a Labour Government would increase—*[Interruption.]* Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Campbell-Savours.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister knows that the next Labour Government will increase capital gains tax and capital transfer tax, and by raising those revenues, in addition to the revenues raised from those who are paid higher levels of salary, we will fund Labour's programme.

Mr. MacGregor: Because of the——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Just stick to the facts.

Mr. MacGregor: Because of the growth in the economy and growth in capital values, the yield from capital taxes has also gone up under this Government. I will stick to the facts. The facts are that the yield from the capital taxes, which the Labour party says it will increase, will fall far short of financing the programme put forward by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and his party. An additional £1·9 billion would be required—I am giving the facts—and even if, as the right hon. Gentleman said, people earning more than £30,000 had to pay more tax, with the implication that others would not, and even if they all were prepared to go on earning at their present rate, with total confiscation of all earnings above £30,000, it would yield only £1½ billion. Those are the facts, and they show that the policy is nonsense.

Mr. Fallon: Does my right hon. Friend agree that his target of 25 per cent. income tax may just be a marker to some people, but means a great deal more to millions of low-paid workers? If he cannot convince his colleagues that consolidation is no policy for the poorly paid and disadvantaged, how can we persuade the public?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right. The purpose of the tax changes in the Budget and of the long-term target of 25 per cent. is meant to be of great benefit and is mainly directed to those on modest incomes.

Mr. Penhaligon: Is not another interpretation the possibility that those job-destroying pay rises, to which the Chancellor referred, have gone to those who are already the highest paid?

Mr. MacGregor: No. If unit labour costs as a whole are going up, that cannot mean that they are confined to only a small band of income earners. The truth is that it is happening across the whole field. That is why the tax changes we have introduced in the Budget will, I hope, help to prevent those rises taking place.

Inflation

11. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of inflation.

Mr. Lawson: Over the 12 months to March 1986 the retail prices index increased by 4·2 per cent. and I expect tomorrow's figure to be substantially better.

Mr. MacKay: Does my right hon. Friend agree that these exciting prospects could be put in jeopardy if employers in the private sector were to continue to concede irresponsible and inflationary wage settlements, with their consequent effect on unit labour costs, the efficiency of British industry and job prospects?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right to talk about the dangers of excessive increases in unit labour costs. However, the consequences will be felt not so much on inflation as on employment and jobs. That is the problem at present. Another and much greater threat to inflation would be if, by any mischance, any of the Opposition parties were to gain office.

Mr. Ashton: When the Chancellor set out on his policy to reduce inflation to this level, did he know that it would create unemployment of nearly 4 million?

Mr. Lawson: It is not inflation that has created unemployment. In fact, the reverse is the case. Rising inflation is bad for jobs. The inflation record of this Government is something of which the whole nation can be proud.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that inflation is not a disease, the cure for which is to forget about it, but a constant pressure in the economy which requires the consistent approaches which we have had until now and which we need in the future?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. The achievement of the Government in getting inflation down as far as we have—it is going down still further—is something which nobody in this country should take for granted.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not interesting that despite all the boasting by the Chancellor about inflation rates, the electorate, at every opportunity since the Budget, have decisively rejected policies which they know mean continuing mass unemployment and cuts in housing, education and the Health Service? Is it not also interesting to note that not only are the public not convinced, but that Cabinet colleagues of the Chancellor are not convinced, such as the Leader of the House, who, in a television interview on Sunday, made it perfectly clear that there must be alternative policies to those pursued by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor?

Mr. Lawson: The Cabinet is united on the importance of getting inflation down, and keeping it down. There is no benefit to this country in inflation going up. Let me say, too, that low inflation is of the greatest importance to those who are seeking jobs.

Confectionery (Value Added Tax)

12. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what value added tax revenue he expects to raise through United Kingdom confectionery sales in the current financial year.

Mr. Brooke: It is estimated that the revenue yield from sales in the United Kingdom of chocolates, sweets and similar confectionary will be about £375 million in 1986-87.

Mr. Gregory: Ever since confectionery in this country has been subject to purchase tax, and subsequently to VAT at the standard rate, there has been a major shift in people's dietary habits. Three cooked meals a day are no longer the norm. Confectionery is part of the daily habit. How much longer can the Chancellor justify taxing confectionery, as it is part of the normal consumption of United Kingdom nationals?

Mr. Brooke: I know my hon. Friend's constituency interest in this matter. I applaud his support for the great confectionery manufacturers there, but I cannot hold out hope that the present VAT treatment of confectionery will change. I remind the House that it was the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), in his first Budget in 1974, who standard-rated chocolate.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Is my hon. Friend aware that I hope very much that he will not increase tax on confectionery in the way in which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor treated the tax on tobacco in the Budget, increasing it by more than the rate of inflation? As a result of that increase there will be a reduction not only in tax receipts from tobacco, but in jobs, as has happened in Northern Ireland, where 900 jobs have been lost. Will my hon. Friend please stop listening to the exaggerated lobby on tobacco smoking, because that is what it is?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about confectionery.

Mr. Brooke: As you say, Mr. Speaker, the question is about confectionery, but the tobacco yield remains buoyant.

Depositary Receipts

13. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about his recent statement on American depositary receipts.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We have received a number of letters, generally welcoming the changes.

Mr. Weetch: Is not the Treasury's recent announcement of a reduction in the tax on conversion of depositary receipts from 5 to 1½ per cent. a straight post-Budget tax

handout to the City of London? When the Chancellor framed his Budget fixing the rate at 5 per cent., was that not a quid pro quo for tax forgone for a lower rate of stamp duty? What has happened to the Chancellor's calculations now? Is this not yet a further example of a Chancellor fixing policies, and well-placed strategic groups in the City of London weakening his resolve and ultimately destroying it?

Mr. Stewart: No. It is not any of those things. In the light of representations that we received following the Budget, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was satisfied that our objectives would be achieved in relation to preserving the revenue from stamp duty with a rate of 1½ per cent. instead of 5 per cent. Under those circumstances, it was a perfectly proper change to make.

Sir William Clark: Does my hon. Friend agree that depositary receipts are an admirable way of funding, particularly expansion overseas, and that that applies not only to American but to European depositary receipts? In view of the fact that our American colleagues are against the tax, does my hon. Friend think that that will jeopardise the negotiations that are now going on for the abolition of the unitary tax system?

Mr. Stewart: I am sure that there is no direct connection between those two matters. If British companies wish to raise funds abroad, I have no reason to think that there will not be a satisfactory and active market in ADRs at the rate of 1½ per cent., since they were growing very rapidly indeed in the months before the Budget at the rate of 1 per cent.

Mr. Blair: Does the Economic Secretary to the Treasury recall that his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer sold this proposal to cut stamp duty and give away £70 million on the basis of this special rate of 5 per cent.? How does he intend to make up the revenue? Why is it that whenever the pensioners knock on the Government's door the Government are hard with them, as they are hard with the sick, the unemployed and the disabled, but are always soft with the City?

Mr. Stewart: If I had time, Mr. Speaker, and if I were in order, I should like to explain at length the many things that this Government have done to help the disabled. When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made his announcement, subsequent to the Budget, about stamp duty changes, he pointed out that they would be revenue-neutral and that therefore there would be no loss of revenue to the Exchequer.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Sheerman: Given the further relentless rise in the unemployment figures that have been announced today and the depressing long-term trend, together with the announcement yesterday of the loss of 3,500 jobs in the British shipbuilding industry and the announcement today of the loss of 1,000 jobs at British Caledonian, will the Prime Minister now announce that she will reverse the disastrous economic polices that she has pursued for the last seven years, or that she will call a general election so that Labour can create genuine jobs?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. I did not notice that Labour did particularly well during the last two by-elections. I am sure the hon. Gentleman noticed that the labour force survey confirmed the overall increase in the number of jobs during the last three years to have been 1 million. I am the first to say that we need more shipbuilding orders, but there are very few of them. However, the hon. Gentleman heard yesterday that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is to take a number of measures to help unemployment in those regions. An enterprise company is to be set up through British Shipbuilders.

Sir Edward du Cann: Has my right hon. Friend noted the deep anxiety with which, on both sides of the House, the announcement about the decline in Britain's shipbuilding capacity was greeted yesterday? Will she re-examine the many constructive proposals that have been put forward for the development of policies to encourage the expansion of the British merchant fleet—national, European and international—upon which the health of all the marine industries depends? May I beg her to bear in mind that the decline in the British merchant fleet and in our shipbuilding capacity is the most serious matter from the point of view of both the economy and defence? It could be changed and it should be changed.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend will be the first to know that the future of British Shipbuilders depends upon success in winning new orders. We are taking a number of measures, particularly with regard to soft credit, to ensure that we can compete on an equal basis with other people. My right hon. Friend will be aware of the tremendous number of surplus ships in the world, amounting to 40 million tonnes, whereas the world capacity is 18 million tonnes. Therefore, the surplus would replace the world capacity.

Mr. Kinnock: Unemployment stands at 3·3 million. Today's figures show the biggest loss in manufacturing jobs in recent years. In the light of that, and in the light of the case that has just been made, not for the first time, by the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), will the Prime Minister now adopt a policy for British shipbuilding of scrap and build, and bring forward public sector orders in order to sustain work and skills in the yards, especially in those areas of very high unemployment? Alternatively, does the Prime Minister intend to stand aside and let British Shipbuilders join the long and growing list of those industries that have become her economic victims?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that there are very few shipbuilding orders about in the world and that many other shipbuilding countries have had to close their shipyards. The Swedes have effectively abandoned merchant shipbuilding, the Dutch Government have refused to support their industry to build the sister ship to the large North sea ferry—won by Govan — the Japanese are having to adjust to the shortage of orders, the Germans have cut their capacity by

half and the French are also cutting capacity. The fact is that there have been so many subsidies for building ships that they have been built and there is surplus tonnage to the tune of 40 million tonnes. There is no point in scrap and build, as there are already too many ships.

Mr. Kinnock: In Japan the unemployment rate is 2·6 per cent., in Sweden it is 2·8 per cent. and in every country which the right hon. Lady has mentioned the unemployment rate is lower than that of Britain, which is nearly 14 per cent. and much lower than the level of nearly 18 per cent. in the northern region of Britain. Different circumstances require different responses. Why will the Prime Minister not look at the option of scrap and build and the option of bringing forward public sector orders for shipbuilding, so as to sustain, for this maritime nation, a viable merchant shipbuilding industry?

The Prime Minister: There are still merchant shipbuilding yards, which I hope will continue. We are trying our level best to get more orders, in particular for Sunderland. With regard to what the right hon. Gentleman has said about full employment in those countries, may I point out that those countries have not attempted to shore up older industries, but have vigorously embraced the new technologies, and that is what we must do.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. Friend join me in regretting today's announcement by British Caledonian of nearly 1,000 redundancies, many of whom are my constituents *[Interruption]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an important question concerning a Member's constituency.

Mr. Soames: In the light of this sad news, will my right hon. Friend have a word with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and ask him to overturn his appalling decision to revoke the licence for the air link between Gatwick and Heathrow?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend has heard what my hon. Friend has said. I regret that British Caledonian found it necessary to make cuts as a response to lower levels of traffic. Much of the reason for falling traffic has been over-exaggerated fears of terrorism, especially in the United States of America. We are doing everything possible to make them realise that this country has a safer capital than almost any other one in Europe.

Mr. James Callaghan: The fact that the Prime Minister quotes countries like Sweden and Germany shows that the Government do not yet understand that there is a strategic necessity to maintain a maritime presence in this country. If she is looking for orders, why not bring forward the naval programme, especially for the large number of coastal vessels, oil rig protection vessels, guard ships and others that are required by the Royal Navy to overcome this cyclical deficiency? If the Prime Minister does not do so, nobody will believe that the Government are making the maximum efforts to preserve this strategic industry.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is aware that there is still merchant shipbuilding capacity in this country. He is also aware, as I have said, that the surplus tonnage of ships is already of the order of 40 million tonnes. There is little point in building more when we have that surplus.

With regard to naval ships, the right hon. Gentleman will also be aware that we have brought forward one of the AOR fleet to help Swan Hunter, and that last year we ordered four major and three smaller warships. That is for the warship yards, which, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, are quite different from the merchant shipbuilding yards.

Q2. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Portillo: If my right hon. Friend turns her attention today to the reallocation of resources in the Health Service to help the worst-off areas, will she reflect on the fact that that policy was originally sponsored by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who is now the leader of the SDP, that it has been supported by both parties when in office and that, even so, in London, under that policy, 70,000 more patients are now being treated than were treated when the Government came to office?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. The policy of reallocating health resources away from London because the population of London was falling and to try to equalise health provision throughout the country was started by the Labour Government and has been continued by this Government. Nevertheless, the number of patients being treated in London has still increased—70,000 more in-patients, 70,000 more day cases and 50,000 more out-patients are treated each year. London continues to have about 20 per cent. of expenditure on the hospital services, for about 15 per cent. of the population, so it is still improving its services.

Dr. Owen: When the falling competitiveness of British industry can be desribed as appalling and alarming today by the Prime Minister's own Employment Secretary, does it not show the completely broken-backed nature of the Government's industrial strategy and that unemployment will continue to rise until there is an income strategy which affects the private and the public sectors?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman had a strict income strategy the last time he was in government as a Labour Minister. He also had a strict prices strategy to keep prices down. Inflation is now much lower than it ever was then. The strategy collapsed in the winter of discontent. The right hon. Gentleman would be very rash even to consider bringing it back.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating Leicester city Conservatives and their leader, Councillor Michael Johnson, on gaining two council seats from Labour and a 7·5 per cent. swing to the Conservatives in Leicester, East? Is she aware that it was done by hard work, far too high rates—an 80 per cent. increase — Nelson Mandela park and a twinning arrangement with Nicaragua?

The Prime Minister: I gladly congratulate my hon. Friend on the excellent results that he achieved in the local government elections.

Q3. **Dr. M. S. Miller** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Miller: Does the Prime Minister intend totally to ignore the lambasting that she has received from the Office

of Health Economics, which shows that the United Kingdom is among the lowest spenders on health of all the developed countries of western Europe? Does she still maintain that the Health Service is safe in her hands? That claim runs entirely counter to the experience of doctors, nurses, Health Service workers and patients. When will she fund the Health Service to cater for the legitimate needs of the population, taking account of the fact that people are living longer and that we live in a technological age?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman considers the figures carefully, he will see that the proportion of public funds spent is not different. The difference occurs because, in many of those countries, people choose to spend far more of their own money on health, on top of state provision. Some of the countries with the top figures spend enormous sums on health privately. Far more is spent on health in Britain than a few years ago. Far more patients are treated — *[Interruption.]* Of course Opposition Members do not like it, but they will hear it. Far more patients are being treated, which is what matters. Patient services have increased, waiting lists have fallen and the number of staff in the NHS who deal directly with patients has increased—nurses and midwives by 60,000 and doctors and dentists by 10,000. I am grateful for the opportunity to give those excellent figures.

Q5. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Callaghan: Is the Prime Minister aware that, despite her declared intention to create a property-owning community, a recent report by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities has produced some disturbing and alarming figures on mortgage arrears? Is she aware that one in 10 families are declared homeless because they cannot pay their mortgages? Is she aware that the number of those in great financial difficulties with their mortgage repayments has increased by 40 per cent. in the past six months? In view of those disturbing figures, what will she do about the problem?

The Prime Minister: The number of mortgage defaults is extremely small compared with the enormous number of people who take out fresh mortgages every year and the great success of the Government in increasing the number of owner-occupiers. Last year more than 1 million new mortgages were given and 1·3 million new homes were built. Home ownership is up to 62 per cent. from 56 per cent. in 1979.

Q6. **Mr. Wilson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Prime Minister realise that following last week's huge fallout of radioactivity in Scotland, which was the heaviest in the United Kingdom, there is a tremendous revulsion against nuclear power? Does she know that the Torness AGR reactor is at present being fuelled up to go into commission, but is not yet in action? As there is 80 per cent. surplus capacity in nuclear generating in Scotland, will she take account of those feelings in Scotland on the issue of nuclear power and instruct forthwith that Torness be not commissioned?

The Prime Minister: No. Many people were pleased to have the Torness reactor built in Scotland, and many people in Scotland have great faith, as we have, in nuclear power as a way of generating electricity. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have great faith in our most excellent Nuclear Inspectorate, which does a tremendous job. *[Interruption.]* I see that he says no. That is what he thinks about the Nuclear Inspectorate, but I am sure that that view is not shared by the rest of the House, nor by the majority of people in Scotland.

Mr. Hayes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) made a serious point to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister about many of his constituents who are being made unemployed today. You may recall that several Opposition Members responded by cheering and laughter — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order.

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I ask you for a ruling to correct an inaccurate statement made yesterday. At Question Time I asked the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry whether his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had met Mr. Robert Stempel of General Motors in New York on 4 May. In reply the Minister said that his right hon. Friend had not met him. The Minister mislead the House with that reply, because he did not say that he had had that meeting. Today I tried to table a question so that the Minister could come to the House and correct that misleading statement, but the Table Office would not allow me to do so. I ask that you allow me to table that question.

Mr. Speaker: I shall look into the matter. As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman asked the Table Office and was told that there was a question on the Order Paper today and that he should wait until the answer was available before tabling his question.

Mr. Bell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. While not in any way challenging your ruling on the first point of order in relation to unemployment in Crawley, may I ask whether it can also be said that it was an incorrect statement of fact? There was no cheering by the Opposition at unemployment in Crawley, just as there is no cheering by Conservative Members at unemployment in Middlesbrough.

Mr. Speaker: Cheering at Prime Minister's questions is legitimate, and today it was somewhat louder than it normally is. We have robust debates in this place, but it is incumbent on the House to give a fair hearing to whoever is on his or her feet.

British Shipbuilders (Statement)

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer you to column 716 of yesterday's *Official Report*, Mr. Speaker, and the reply that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made to my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) on the British Shipbuilders statement. My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough said:

"He has mentioned Cuba and China, but he has not said whether, if those orders transpire, the yards that he has mentioned today for closure will stay open. Will he now give the House the commitment that, if those orders transpire between now and the end of the year those yards, including Smith's Dock, will stay open?"

The Secretary of State replied:

"If an adequate number of orders can be found to keep those yards open, that will be highly desirable and something that I would welcome."—[*Official Report*, 14 May 1986; Vol.97, c. 716.]

He went on to say that he thought that it was highly unlikely. However, he clearly indicated that, if orders were available at a sufficient level, the decision on those yards and on redundancies by other yards that are not closing could be reversed——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As far as I can judge from what the hon. Gentleman is saying, these are not matters for me. I think that they should correctly be put to the Leader of the House at business questions. If the hon. Gentleman will contain himself, I will give him that opportunity.

Mr. Clay: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not responsible for what Ministers say at the Dispatch Box, nor can I adjudicate upon it. I will give the hon. Gentleman an opportunity to raise that point with the Leader of the House who may well be able to give him the answer that he requires. I cannot.

Mr. Clay: Further to that point of order——

Official Report

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order relating to the accuracy of the *Official Report*. I rang your office this morning to draw attention to it, because it apparently is the case that instructions have been given to the Official Reporters that comments made by Members from a sedentary position are not to be reported. Hon. Members on both sides of the House occasionally make such comments, and sometimes the Minister or the Member thus interrupted makes a reference to the interruption which is then deleted.

I am not asking you to give a ruling today, but it is a very important question, Mr. Speaker. The full flavour of the House is contributed to not only by Members on their feet but by Members from a sedentary position. Also, now that the sound archives are available, anyone listening to the sound archives would hear the sedentary comments but would not find them reported in *Hansard*. I understand that instructions have been given that sedentary interruptions are not to be reported and, indeed, that certain other phrases that have been used in the House are to be deleted.

As you will know, Mr. Speaker, "Erskine May", on page 237, says that you are responsible, through the Clerk of the House, for the accuracy of the Votes and Proceedings, and through the Editor, whom you appoint, for the *Official Report* of debates, but that the Editor of *Hansard* is himself responsible for the preparation of an accurate report. I read from "Erskine May" at page 249:

"The Editor is responsible for producing a verbatim report on proceedings in the House . . .for the publication in the *Official Report*."

The point that I make, Mr. Speaker, is that this affects the integrity of the record. No other Member is allowed to have his phrases removed, and if the Speaker were, through the Clerk, to give instructions, it would affect the integrity of the record. I do not expect that you are able to give a ruling today, but I ask you to consider very carefully either whether this should be referred to the Procedure Committee or alternatively whether, as with the Library and computer bureau, there should be a Committee of the House that overlooks the preparation of *Hansard* where, hitherto, discretion on whether to report or not to report has been left to the Editor then supervising the preparation of the record.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very big question that I raise. I hope that you will not hasten to reply at once, but I believe that this is a matter that affects the records of Parliament and, indeed, the integrity of its report.

Mr. Speaker: It is an important matter and I am able to reply because the right hon. Gentleman kindly gave me notice that he was going to raise this matter.

May I make it plain to the House that there is nothing new in what I said yesterday. The practices followed in compiling the *Official Report* are of long standing and are as follows. First, sedentary comments are not reported unless they are taken up either by the Member who has the Floor or by the Chair.

Secondly, if the Chair calls for order or the Member on his feet takes up a group of comments, that is normally reported by the word "interruption". I believe that these practices should be closely observed. I am sure that the House would not wish the occupant of the Chair to rise every few minutes to deal with sedentary interruptions.

Nor do I think that the House would wish a Member to be put on the record when he has not been called by the Chair, either to speak or to intervene in a speech.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Benn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I fully respect what you have said, but I ask you to consider two things. First of all, as I understand it, the discretion has hitherto been left in implementing the rules to the Official Reporters and the Editor for the day. Secondly, yesterday, it so happens, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) made an intervention that was the subject of a reply by the Front Bench Minister who was then speaking. I understand that the instructions were that that was to be removed. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, that you felt it necessary to give a ruling today, because I urge you to consider the danger of the sound archives recording what actually happened and *Hansard* recording what the Clerk, on your instructions, told *Hansard* to report. I beg you to give consideration to this matter, and perhaps allow it to be referred to the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member, and any other Member, can refer such matters to the Procedure Committee—that is not a matter for me. I cannot go beyond what I have said. This is a principle of long standing, and I do not think that the House would wish to have it changed. I rather sensed that from the response that I received.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may recall that some of us occasionally make interventions from a sedentary position——

Mr. Alf Dubs (Battersea): Never.

Mr. Faulds: Occasionally. I have now been here a long time—more than most hon. Members—*[Interruption.]* and there are many more years to come. I recall, and I am sure that you will endorse my argument, Sir, that in those earlier days, frequently sedentary interventions were recorded, whether there was a riposte or not, and they very frequently enlivened the debates, often made valuable points, and were very germane to the debate. I am open to correction, but I understand that you were the one who introduced the change — *[Interruption.]* Well, your predecessor, among his many other mistakes——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is unworthy of the hon. Gentleman. I have introduced no new principle. I ask the House to consider the implications of every comment from a sedentary position being recorded in *Hansard*, because after all, what would then be the point of making a speech?

Mr. Faulds: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If I could finish——

Mr. Benn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Faulds: If I could finish my point, I should be grateful. I am simply backing the good advice given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), that perhaps this matter should be considered further, and we should revert to the earlier practice.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Loth as I am to come to the support of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), filial piety obliges me to say that when, in 1939, my father said "Speak for England" in Arthur Greenwood's speech, he did so from a sedentary position, and it is recorded.

Mr. Benn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) has cited a famous example of a comment from a sedentary position, which became a historic phrase, quoted around the world. If I may say so, with great respect, Mr. Speaker, I am not asking that that practice should be changed, but that the practice remain unchanged. I was concerned to hear you say that you are sure that the House would not wish to find the record punctuated by such remarks. If sedentary remarks are undesirable, they should be dealt with as they are, by the discipline that is vested in you, Mr. Speaker, not by deleting them from *Hansard*.

I beg you to take seriously the points that I am making. We are preparing and publishing records for future generations, who will want to get the flavour of the House as well as the words that have been cleared by the Clerks.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest) *rose*——

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): What did your old man say?

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is quite an important matter. I frequently do not hear remarks made from a sedentary position, and I did not hear that one.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: In support of what you have just said, Mr. Speaker, and with reference to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) said about the famous appeal by his father to a right hon. Member of the Labour party to speak for England, if you will refer to the official record of that day in 1939 you will not find it. Those words went round the world by virtue of the newspaper press, but because they were uttered from a sedentary position they were not reported in *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker: That is perhaps the fact, but let me clear this matter. I think that the whole House would wish me to do that. Sedentary comments that add to the flavour of the debate are one thing. Constant sedentary comments that are designed to interrupt someone who is on his feet do not add to the debate. That was the point that I was trying to make yesterday and not in any way altering the traditional rules, which I have now affirmed.

Business of the House

3.47 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week—and the *Hansard* for 1939?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 19 MAY—Progress on remaining stages of the Social Security Bill (1st Allotted Day).

TUESDAY 20 MAY—Completion of remaining stages of the Social Security Bill (2nd Allotted Day).

There will be a debate to approve the first report from the Privileges Committee 1985-86 (House of Commons Paper No. 376).

WEDNESDAY 21 MAY—Until about seven o'clock, Second Reading of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]* followed by a debate on a motion to take note of the situation in the shipbuilding industry.

Motion relatng to the Town and Country Planning (NIREX) Special Development Order.

THURSDAY 22 MAY—Second Reading of the Sex Discrimination Bill *[Lords]*.

FRIDAY 23 MAY—Debates on the motion for the Adjournment.

Mr. Kinnock: First, may I welcome the fact that Ministers responded to demands made by right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and myself yesterday and conceded an emergency debate on the crisis in the merchant shipbuilding industry. Even at this late stage, however, I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman could arrange a different time for the debate next week so that it takes place earlier in the week and, indeed, earlier in the day. There is great interest in the country generally and great anxiety in the shipbuilding areas about this issue and, therefore, great urgency should be attached to the debate.

Today, another rise in unemployment has been recorded, yet the Government still refuse to come to the House to defend their policies, which have brought about this inexorable rise. I have been asking the right hon. Gentleman for some time to arrange such a debate. Semi-detached though he may currently be, I am sure that he has enough of a relationship with the Government to assure us that, in the near future, there could be a debate on unemployment in Government time. I hope that that is the case.

Mr. Gorbachev's views expressed last night add further to the need for a wide-ranging foreign affairs debate, preferably a two-day debate. Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for such a debate as soon as possible after the House reconvenes on 3 June?

We regret that only three hours is to be given to the Second Reading of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill. Could not the right hon. Gentleman postpone the Second Reading of the Sex Discrimination Bill on Thursday so that the Scottish legislation could receive longer consideration on that day in its place?

May I remind the right hon. Gentleman of the need for debates on the arts and conservation policy and urge him to ensure that time is quickly provided?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also ensure that we have a debate upon manning in the Metropolitan police, especially in the light of today's news that the increase in officers sought by Sir Kenneth Newman is not to be met, despite the Prime Minister's undertaking at the Conservative party conference last year that

"Should the police need more men, more equipment, they shall have them."

Finally, in view of the disputes this week, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a debate in the near future on the resource allocation working party and its operation in the National Health Service? Such a debate is necessary so that Conservative Members who represent London, excluding the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), can give a proper airing to the view that they have expressed in a letter to the Prime Minister that the Government are selling London short in health terms.

Mr. Biffen: May I respond to the points made by the Leader of the Opposition in reverse order?

I am sure that a debate on the allocation of resources in the NHS would command general interest and would also give the Government the opportunity to deploy their formidable case in that area. But at the moment, as the right hon. Gentleman will know, the pressure on the time of the House intensifies as we approach the end of July. However, that is a matter that we can consider.

I shall, of course, refer the points about the Metropolitan police to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

I note the interest in debates on the arts and conservation, and doubtless that can feature in discussions through the usual channels.

I take account of the request that more time should be made available for the Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill, but again that is something that can best be pursued through the usual channels.

I agree that there will be great merit in arranging a debate upon foreign affairs as soon as reasonably practical and convenient after——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The right hon. Gentleman says that every time.

Mr. Biffen: Of course I say it every time. It is the best thing that I have to say. The hon. Gentleman will not ultimately be disappointed in this matter.

I note the request for a debate on unemployment. It can be attended to through the usual channels.

I am happy that it was recognised that the Government fully identify the shipbuilding industry as being a matter of major industrial and current political concern. I am grateful that there is recognition of that in the debate that we have arranged. I note it is thought not to be of maximum convenience, but perhaps that is also something that we can look at through the usual channels.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): With reference to Tuesday's important debate on the Privileges Select Committee report, has my right hon. Friend seen the inaccurate and misleading letter written to hon. Members by members of the parliamentary Lobby journalists which referred throughout to the leaking of a Select Committee report when in fact it was the leak of a draft chairman's report? As the coverage of this matter in the press has perhaps been less than balanced, will my right hon. Friend urge right hon. and hon. Members to read the full report and the evidence before taking a view on the matter?

Mr. Biffen: I have seen the letter, and, indeed, I suspect, most Members of the House have had that

advantage. My right hon. Friend makes a pertinent commentary upon it, and it will be to the great advantage of the House if it has a chance to take account of those views.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): In view of the decision of the Central Electricity Generating Board not to publish the board of inquiry report into Hinkley Point, and in view of the decision of the nuclear inspectorate not to publish the 20-year inquiry report into the Magnox reactors, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Energy to make a statement on both of those matters next week?

Mr. Biffen: I note the hon. Gentleman's request. Although we have recently had a wide-ranging debate on that topic, I shall certainly draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Is my right hon. Friend aware that information has recently come to light to suggest that the person who proposed the motion, subsequently taken up by the National Union of Journalists, to send condolences to President Gaddafi of Libya is a gentleman of Iraqi origin who is the head of the Libyan news agency, Jana, in London? He came to this country in 1978 as a political refugee, and was subsequently granted political asylum. Is not the fact that the NUJ paid attention to such an individual a shaming indictment of the activities of its leadership? Is it not about time that it apologised to the British public for its extraordinary antics?

Mr. Biffen: I suspect that very few hon. Members knew about that information, but it represents an interesting commentary on that resolution, and I am sure that there will be interest in the NUJ's reaction to it.

Mr. James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): May I reinforce the request of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition that the Government might reconsider the time that they have kindly given for a debate on the shipbuilding industry? Will the Leader of the House bear in mind that the fortunes of the shipping industry and the Royal Navy are bound up in the shipbuilding industry? Will he therefore consider giving a full day's consideration to that most important subject?

Mr. Biffen: I note what the right hon. Gentleman says, and I have no doubt that that, too, will be assessed by the usual channels.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I shall not trouble him today about the early-day motion concerning the miscarriage of justice in the Maguire case?

[That this House notes the widespread concern felt in Parliament by eminent scientists, by other responsible observers and by members of the public who have viewed programmes on the matter screened by Channel 4, that Anne Maguire, Patrick Maguire (senior), Vincent Maguire (then aged 17), Patrick Maguire (then aged 14), Sean Smyth, Patrick O'Neill and the late Giuseppe Conlan, sentenced in 1976 to long terms of imprisonment since served, now appear, despite confirmation of their convictions at the time by the Court of Appeal, to have been entirely innocent of the crime with which they were charged; further notes at the conclusion of a debate in the other place on 17th May 1975, the recognition by the Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Home Office of the strength of feeling on this matter in that House and his pledge to draw the attention of the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what had been said; and therefore earnestly urges the Secretary of State for the Home Department in the interests of the highest standards of British justice of which this country needs to feel rightly proud, to move without delay for a review of these convictions, either under the provisions of section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968, or by such other public process of review as he may deem appropriate to this disturbing case.]

Instead, may I ask my right hon. Friend to recall the regret that he shared with me at the displacement of the Whitsun holiday by the spring holiday? Should not the House set a better example and not sit on a Whit Monday, thereby downgrading the birthday of the Christian Church?

Mr. Biffen: I think that I can just about recognise the outlines of a banana skin in my hon. Friend's final observation. I should like to give further thought to his well-intentioned observation. While reminiscing, I should point out that I did not immediately answer the Leader of the Opposition's question. But, in my judgment, my hon. Friend is absolutely right about how Hansard treated the remarks of Leo Amery.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that he did not sound very convincing when he said that he would welcome a debate on the under-funding of the NHS, because he then pleaded shortage of time? Does he realise that a debate would not simply involve London versus the rest? From our experience in north Staffordshire, we know that it simply is not true that other areas prosper while London declines. In north Staffordshire we have had red alerts every week bar one throughout the winter. London has had just one week of red alerts.

Mr. Biffen: Of course I appreciate that any debate on the NHS would be truncated if it referred merely to the health services in the London area. But I would have to accommodate such a debate within the discipline of all the other demands that are made on parliamentary time as we approach a period of peak demand.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to come to the House at the earliest opportunity to explain something that he said yesterday, during questions on the statement on British Shipbuilders? He said:

> "If an adequate number of orders can be found to keep those yards open, that will be highly desirable and something that I would welcome."—[*Official Report*, 14 May, 1986; Vol. 97, c. 716.]

Two hours before he said that, British Shipbuilders told the trade unions in Newcastle that, whatever orders were found, those yards would close and that the redundancies announced would go ahead. That has been checked and confirmed again this morning.

Does the Secretary of State know what is going on? Did he knowingly mislead the House? Who is in charge—the Secretary of State or British Shipbuilders, which seems hell-bent on running down the industry whether or not it obtains orders? Will the Secretary of State come to the House, because the matter cannot wait until the debate

[Mr. Bob Clay]

next week? People who are being made redundant and whose yards are threatened with closure want to know what is happening.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman made a number of generalised accusations, including one against the good name of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I reject any accusation of ill faith against my right hon. Friend.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to refer his remarks to my right hon. Friend, and of course I shall do so.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is it possible at some time to have a debate on constitutional matters during which we could perhaps discuss hung Parliaments and coalition Parliaments, among other things? In particular, the House could take note of the fact that people in Cambridgeshire and elsewhere who have experienced the horrors of a Lib-Lab coalition detested what they saw and decisively rejected it.

Mr. Biffen: The prospect of a convincing Conservative majority after the next election should lift from my hon. Friend all those agonies. Of course, I undertake to consider an interesting constitutional innovation, not least because it would be helpful if the Opposition parties, especially the Liberal and Social Democratic parties, were to be a little more forthcoming about how they would react to the situation outlined by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk (Knowsley, North): Will the Leader of the House try to be a little more sympathetic to and forthcoming about the request of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition for an early debate on unemployment? Would it not be appropriate, on the day on which record unemployment figures have been announced, for the right hon. Gentleman to say that there will be an early opportunity to discuss the increasing and horrendous levels of unemployment on Merseyside, and in particular the recent redundancies in Kirby in my constituency? Is it not time that my constituents were given some semblance of an idea of what prospects the Government hold out of them ever having permanent, full-time employment?

Mr. Biffen: I think that I responded in a prudent and realistic manner to the Leader of the Opposition, and I would hope that he would feel that it was a reasonable answer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Will my right hon. Friend ensure that next Wednesday's debate on the NIREX special development order is at least a three-hour debate? I recognise that he is under no great pressure in that the Labour party is committed to this policy and the Liberal party chief whip has endorsed burial of nuclear waste in surface facilities — but I am not and do not. My constituents and those in related constituencies insist on having our case fully put, and one and a half hours is an insufficient time in which to do so.

Mr. Biffen: I take note of my hon. Friend's remarks. I think that the question of timing might reasonably be considered through the usual channels.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): In view of the widespread interest in Scotland in the Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill, will the right hon. Gentleman sympathetically consider the request by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition for further time to discuss that very important matter?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that I can go beyond the reply that I gave to the Leader of the Opposition, but I have of course, noted the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Will my right hon. Friend bring forward to the earliest possible date the debate on the defence Estimates, because defence spending in real terms is to go down by 6 per cent. and there is also an urgent need for an expanded naval shipbuilding programme for strategic as well as good industrial and social reasons?

Mr. Biffen: I understand my hon. Friend's point. I am sure that he will realise that there is much merit in having the report of the Select Committee available before the debate takes place.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): May I press the right hon. Gentleman once again on the need for an early debate on the funding of the NHS? Is he aware that the Prime Minister, on more than one occasion this week, has implied that the north of England is better off as a result of a reallocation of NHS resources?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, despite that, the Newcastle district health authority has reported that there is no possibility of meeting its budget in either the short or the long term without ward closures? That has resulted in a proposal to close the Fleming memorial hospital, which for almost 100 years has provided highly specialised services for children.

The Prime Minister said that the north is better off. Will she explain that to those who rightly ask how, given that disastrous set of circumstances, the north can possibly be better off? Can there be an early debate so that the matter may be clarified?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not think it an unfair comment if I said that he has just presented a miniature speech rather than a request. However, I notice that it did include a request.

The Government have such a formidable case on the provision of hospital building and health services that we would be happy to have a debate, but its timing must be considered through the usual channels.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): At the Venice meeting of the Western European Union the Council of Ministers was reluctant to envisage any progress in the reactivation of WEU. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that should be the subject of debate in the Chamber as the WEU is the second layer to NATO?

Mr. Biffen: I understand my hon. Friend's attachment to the WEU. Indeed, the House has a long and enduring relationship with that body. The best that I can do in the first instance is to refer my hon. Friend's comments to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Can the Leader of the House confirm that there will be only a single motion for the debate on the Privileges Committee report on Tuesday? As privilege is widely misunderstood—and not only outside the House—and as the recommendation links the alleged breach of privilege with a specific

penalty, would it not be better for the House to take the alleged breach of privilege and the proposed penalty as separate questions?

Mr. Biffen: The motion has already been tabled and has appeared on the Order Paper for, I think, at least two days. Any other arrangements must be within the gift of the Chair.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): My question also relates to next Tuesday's debate on privilege. Given the importance of this matter both to journalists who work in this place and to hon. Members, can my right hon. Friend assure us that the debate will be taken at a reasonable time —perhaps 10 o'clock, and no later—and that there will be plenty of time to deal with matter?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. I think that the business that I have announced gives a clear indication of when we expect the debate to get under way. I take this opportunity to say that I hope that the length of the dabate will be broadly similar to that when *The Economist* issue was debated.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to study early-day motion No. 851 concerning the nuclear threat to Salisbury Plain occasioned by cruise missiles touring around Salisbury Plain last weekend?

[That this House notes that over the weekend period of 7th to 12th May a large convoy of military vehicles accompanied a cruise missile launcher around Salisbury Plain; regrets the danger to local people of this convoy; is appalled that roads around Tilshead were closed to prevent the public seeing the missiles; further regrets that a United States Army vehicle carrying messages to the convoy crashed in the churchyard fence at Tilshead Parish Church but congratulates those who were able to write peace signs on its side windows; and finally recognises that cruise missiles are not wanted in the United Kingdom.]

Does the right hon. Gentleman think that, in view of the denial of civil liberties to the people of that area through road closures, police presence and harassment and the sheer inefficiency of clogging roads with military vehicles for several days, the Secretary of State for Defence should come to the House and explain what the danger is to people in that area and the rest of the country rom those missiles touring around? Should not the Secretary of State also tell the House what he proposes to do to protect the people of that area from the massive police presence that seems to occasion American missiles every time they are let loose on our roads?

Mr. Biffen: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's strictures on either the armed forces or the police. I shall, of course, draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to the anxieties that the hon. Gentleman has expressed.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Does my right hon. Friend realise that the Building Societies Bill completed its Committee stage at the end of February, yet we still await its Report stage? As this is an important and, indeed, growing part of the Government's housing policy, will my right hon. Friend please bring the Bill forward for Report as quickly as possible?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what my hon. Friend has said. I know only too well the significance of the Bill for the building industry generally. As my hon. Friend can see, it does not feature in the business for next week, but I hope that it will not be too long delayed.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Will the Leader of the House give us an assurance that the debate on shipbuilding next week will be wide-ranging? Is he aware that the closure of Smith's Dock on Teesside, adding to the already record levels of unemployment in Cleveland, has been a devastating blow to the entire community? Will he provide an opportunity for Ministers from the Department of the Environment, the Department of Employment and other Departments who should be involved in the solutions to these problems to respond to the issues raised in the debate?

Mr. Biffen: I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's remarks are borne in mind by those who will draft the motion. The Ministers who will take part in the debate will be so drawn as to enable the debate to be dealt with in the broadest sense.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): May I support my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) in asking for increased time for the debate on nuclear waste that is to take place on Wednesday? Many Members have an interest in the matter and many will wish to contribute to the debate. After the Minister has spoken, there will not be much time left for Back Benchers. I believe that the debate should be given added mileage.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Well done.

Mr. Biffen: I understand the point that has been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis), and elaborated on from a sedentary position by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). Were it not for these remarks, "Speak for England" would have to rely on the Press Gallery.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Leader of the House will know that some weeks ago the Government published a report on irradiated food and its suitability or otherwise for the populace. He should know that representations have to be submitted by the end of July, and he should know also that the Minister responsible for these matters has refused to give me information which I consider it essential to have in my possession for any representations that I may make in response to the report. Will he tell me how, through the procedures of the House, I can get information which I consider to be essential?

Mr. Biffen: In the first instance, the hon. Gentleman might like to ventilate the matter in an Adjournment debate. The Minister would then be able to deal fully with the issues concerned in public view, as it were.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House consider again the importance of having an economic debate, if not next week, then perhaps after the recess, not least because it would relate to some of the implications of his remarks which were made last Sunday on television, and because when we consider our position among OECD countries the alarming reality is hitting us more and more that we are the least investing country among the large and advanced economies, so called? Our rate of asset reinvestment is about one fifth of that which Japan is achieving, and its GNP is already much greater than ours. This is becoming a serious matter, not least for the unemployed.

Mr. Biffen: Today's unemployment figures clearly add to the general interest in economic affairs. I think that my hon. Friend will agree that the House has fairly frequent opportunities of debating economic matters, but I shall bear his request in mind. He will have heard that there are many other requests for debates against which his request will have to be taken.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his reply to me last week and his refusal to arrange for a debate, statement or inquiry into the murders and disappearance of British servicemen after their interrogation by German Army Group E — Kurt Waldheim being in charge of the interrogation — especially in the light of documentary evidence that is now available of British soldiers being sent for special treatment according to the Fuhrer's order — in other words, for their elimination? Surely this is a matter which the Government cannot turn aside by saying that it has nothing to do with them.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. and learned Gentleman has written to me on these matters and I have replied to him today.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Is my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House aware of an apparent flaw in the Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985 whereby ladies entering into surrogacy arrangement contracts are being paid to keep a diary, such arrangements being contrary to the spirit of the Act? May we have an opportunity to debate that and the lack of provision currently for religious education in our schools? Many schools are offering peace studies rather than true religious education.

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the issue raised by my hon. Friend would make the subject of a lively and constructive debate. I must ask him, however, to observe the demands for debates on a wide range of topics which have been made this afternoon. It would be misleading if I said that one could be arranged at an early date.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Is the Leader of the House aware that two and three quarter hours to discuss the special development order for the NIREX disposal site is entirely inadequate? Conservative Members who support the nuclear industry but do not want it in their back yard will wish to speak. Secondly, it will take two and three quarter hours for the alliance to explain how it agrees with the Labour party when it is in favour of an independent nuclear deterrent, which means that it is necessary to produce plutonium, which in turn makes it necessary to have reprocessing. The alliance is in favour of getting rid of Sellafield, but it would have to keep it to produce plutonium for the independent nuclear deterrent. Why was the alliance established, and why did members of the SDP leave the Labour party? Are they all unilateralists now?

Mr. Biffen: If all those matters really are the consequence of a special development order of the Department of the Environment, I understand why there is a request for more time. As I have said, the matter can be considered through the usual channels.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Has my right hon. Friend noticed that wage negotiations in the electricity supply industry have broken down, with a threatened overtime ban on 25 May? As it is essential for the well-being of the nation that there is industrial peace in the electricity supply industry, will the Government arrange for a statement to be made next week to explain how they hope to help the management and unions out of their present difficulties?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that anyone in the House will underestimate the serious implications of industrial action in the electricity supply industry. I am sure that everyone will wish the House to act in the most constructive way possible to secure an early resolution of the dispute. I shall refer my hon. Friend's remarks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on when it might be appropriate to make a statement.

Mr. Leo Abse (Torfaen): May I again draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the early-day motion standing in my name, which has been signed by 101 Members, relating to family courts?

[That this House welcomes the establishment of the Family Courts Campaign to promote the early implementation of family courts, following the support for family courts recently expressed by the Law Society, the Association of County Councils, the Association of Directors of Social Services and many other bodies; welcomes the recommendations of the report of the Matrimonial Causes Procedure Committee, particularly those relating to the establishment of conciliation in matrimonial proceedings; notes with concern that the report of the Law Commission on Family Law, Illegitimacy, has yet to be implemented; further notes that the joint study set up in July 1984 by the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State for the Home Department to re-examine the idea of a unified family court, and study the resources implications in terms of finance, manpower and accommodation is due to be published shortly; regrets that this study has been so long delayed; and urges the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State for the Home Department to come forward with proposals for legislation at the earliest opportunity, following the publication of their report and their subsequent consultation on the most appropriate model for implementation.]

Bearing in mind the legitimate anxiety expressed yesterday by HRH Princess Margaret and the widespread belief—I do not know why the right hon. Gentleman is smiling—that there is a need for a genuine family court if we are to deal with the problems of child abuse and child neglect, will he provide an opportunity for a debate during which we shall be able to discuss the arid and legalistic report that was issued this week—as arid and legalistic as is *The Times* editorial this morning — and reflect public opinion, thereby showing the wide gap on this issue between the legalistic bureaucrats in the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Treasury and the House?

Mr. Biffen: The smile that crossed my face was one of appreciation and admiration of the skill with which the hon. Gentleman develops his argument and his case, which from now onwards will have "By Royal Appointment" stamped well and truly upon it. I shall consider his request for a debate, but he will know the difficulties that face me. I appreciate that the issue which he has raised has a real House of Commons interest.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend make arrangements for an early debate on the most important Audit Commission report on education,

which calls for the closure of 1,000 comprehensive schools over the next few years and the consequent redundancy of 5,000 teachers per year in addition to natural wastage, as well as making the valuable suggestion that there should be better payment of extra good teachers? This is a crucial report for the country generally and for the education service especially. I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend would arrange an early and wide-ranging debate upon it.

Mr. Biffen: I cannot in all conscience promise that there is the prospect of an early and wide-ranging debate on the report. I shall draw the remarks of my hon. Friend to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I know that there will be genuine public interest in any proposal which involves such massive school closures.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): May I reinforce the argument of my hon. and, in view of his recent activity perhaps I should say learned, Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse) about the need to debate a family court structure? I remind the Leader of the House that the Select Committee, in its report on the care of children, made a strong recommendation in recommendation 36 that this issue could be examined. In view of the time that has been taken by the Lord Chancellor, does not the right hon. Gentleman think that it is high time to debate the issue in the House so that hon. Members can give guidance to the Government on what they feel should be introduced?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the point that the hon. Lady has made. She brought to the argument the authority of the Chairman of the appropriate departmental Select Committee. I do not think that I can go beyond what I said earlier.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I reinforce the request that has been made by other hon. Members. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House who said that he will consider the matter through the usual channels. If he uses the usual channels for that purpose — bearing in mind that, during the recent debate on nuclear policy the Labour party and the Liberal party clearly acknowledged that they would go along with the special development order — he might receive the wrong answer. How will he use the usual channels for the request? Hon. Members are involved at a constituency level.

Mr. Biffen: I note charitably what my hon. Friend has said, but I think that he should be a little cautious before trying to elevate himself into a usual channel—it is not that great a life.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): Is the Leader of the House aware that yesterday the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry informed Cornish Members that a final decision on at least one tin mine would be made in the first week of June? Does that mean that we cannot have a debate in the House before the final decision is made? Although we understand why we are having a debate next week about shipbuilding, will the Leader of the House explain to those who live in Cornwall why not one moment has been found in the past six months to discuss the tin industry?

Mr. Biffen: The matter has been considered by a departmental Select Committee. Its report and the Government's reactions to it ought to be a precondition for a debate. I take account of what the hon. Gentleman has said. I realise only too well that the matter is of immense significance in the Duchy.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): My right hon. Friend may recall a debate some weeks ago initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive order. Because of a brilliant but somewhat lengthy speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), I was unable to speak. As I and some of my hon. Friends intend to vote against the order, it is vital that we are given an opportunity to speak. Therefore, I earnestly request the Leader of the House to allow a three or four-hour debate.

Mr. Biffen: I will convey to my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary the fact that my hon. Friend intends to vote against the Government. I will also take account of the fact that he seeks an extended time for the debate.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does the Leader of the House consider that, in view of the obvious unease and disquiet about the problems that have occurred in the nuclear industry, it is time that we had a debate on the coal mining industry before we run into the 1960s danger of wasting millions of pounds investment? As the Government wish to turn the coal mining industry into a market situation, and as we are waving goodbye to the old chairman and welcoming the new chairman, does the Leader of the House agree that this is an appropriate time to state the House's position on an overall energy policy based on what we know is a safe fuel—coal?

Mr. Biffen: I said earlier that the hon. Gentleman made a persuasive case for the coal industry even though his remarks were, by necessity, somewhat brief. I cannot promise the prospect of an early debate on the coal industry, for reasons that have been apparent this afternoon. Many demands are being made on Government time. That does not in any sense diminish the importance of the point that the hon. Gentleman has made. I will see that it is conveyed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I refer to the request for a debate on NIREX and the special development order. The issue involved has caused great concern to the three or four parties that are affected. More than 120,000 people have signed a petition in Humberside, principally in south Humberside. I understand that the petition will be presented to the House of Commons on Wednesday. County councils, borough councils and district councils have had numerous public meetings which were attended by all my local hon. Friends who have spoken this afternoon. I strenuously urge my right hon. Friend to allow the debate to take place over three or four hours. The arguments against the NIREX proposals will be advanced only by Conservative Members. My right hon. Friend knows that they will not be advanced by the Opposition, because the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has already given his view that a shallow-based disposal facility is satisfactory. Unless a three-hour debate is granted, the issues will not be satisfactorily canvassed by those hon. Members who are affected.

Mr. Biffen: I have said that the matter can be consiered further through the usual channels. I assure my hon. Friend that I shall make certain that his views are considered.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I ask the Leader of the House a question of which I gave him notice for a considered reply. In view of Roger Todd's well-researched article on the sinking of the Sheffield in the *Daily Mirror*, has the time come for discussion of the major minority report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs on the events of 1 and 2 May 1982?

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman who, with characteristic courtesy, informed me that he would raise the question. I will consider further the possibility of a debate on the Select Committee's report. It can be discussed through the usual channels.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, on remarriage, a war widow loses for ever her entitlement to a war widow's pension, and that on the death of any subsequent husband she cannot claim it with effect from that day? Is it not time that we had a debate on the subject of war widow's pensions so that we can discuss not only the level but the mechanics of entitlement that make the payment fairer, because at the moment widows are discouraged from remarrying?

Mr. Biffen: I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend has said. He has been a most effective campaigner for war widows. He is more likely to bring the matter to the Floor of the House through the technique ot an Adjournment debate than a general debate because, quite frankly, I do not think that there is time available.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that on 27 March I drew his attention to early-day motions 204 and 217?

[That this House notes with concern that speech therapists, members of a highly-skilled caring profession, discharging a wide range of responsibilities, are underpaid in comparison with other National Health Service professionals doing work of equal value; notes also that speech therapy is traditionally a female profession; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to provide sufficient funds to enable speech therapists' salary levels to be increased so that speech therapists receive equal pay for work of equal value.]

[That this House expresses its appreciation of the valuable work performed by speech therapists; and, in expressing its concern that decreasing comparative salary levels will dissuade the ablest of individuals from entering this profession, calls upon Her Majesty's Government to ensure that speech therapists are remunerated at a level equal to that of other graduate specialists within the National Health Service.]

The motions were signed by 119 and 87 hon. Members, respectively, on both sides of the House. At that time I told the right hon. Gentleman that there was a demand for a statement to be made by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. The Leader of the House, in his usual courteous and balanced way, said that he would draw the attention of his right hon. Friend to the demand. What has been the result of his representations?

Mr. Biffen: I think that I must have notice of that question.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I reinforce the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) in his request for a debate on education. Yesterday, Smith's Dock in Langbaurgh was closed and, for the second time in three years, an axe is hanging over schools in my constituency. It was reported today that a further 1,000 schools are liable to close in future. That cannot help young people in my constituency who saw their jobs disappearing yesterday and are seeing their schools disappearing today.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend rightly alerts the House to what will be a general anxiety about a report which contains massive school closure proposals. However, they are just proposals from an advisory body. More generally, I refer him to the answer I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Last week I asked the Leader of the House a question about regional aid and the Government's policy, especially on the north-east region. The Leader of the House gave a reply which, unwittingly, was slightly helpful. Given the niggardly amount that the Government gave the north-east by way of regional aid, will he take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the distribution of regional aid is efficient and quick?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that a company in my constituency, Laceintel Ltd, has applied for regional aid which is desperately required to pay for industrial machinery and has to be paid by the end of next week? Unless the application is considered and granted by the end of next week, 55 jobs will be in jeopardy. Will the right hon. Gentleman have a word with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry about the matter and see whether he can expedite the consideration of the application?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly refer the problems outlined by the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of early-day motion 845 in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends?

[That this House regards with astonishment the refusal of the Secretary of State for Wales to meet Ogwr Borough Council about the critical job losses it has suffered, and about the need to restore development area status, the case for which was fuelled by the crisis created by the Ford announcement; regards this grave discourtesy to a major Welsh council as breaking the traditional availability of the Welsh Office Ministers to Members of Parliament and to the councils; and warns the Secretary of State that though he has slammed the Welsh Office doors in the face of the people of Wales he cannot hide indefinitely behind those doors from the wrath of the very people whose interests he should represent and champion.]

It concerns the refusal of the Secretary of State for Wales to meet Ogwr borough council to discuss the downgrading of development area status. If the right hon. Gentleman is not prepared to allow a debate next week on this vital issue, will he raise the matter in Cabinet to highlight the arrogance that is rubbing off the Prime Minister on to the Secretary of State for Wales? The Secretary of State will not meet the borough council. On Tuesday afternoon, 50 Ogwr borough councillors attended the House of Commons for the purpose of meeting the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State, or any other Tory Member of Parliament, yet not one of those invited turned up.

Mr. Biffen: I totally reject the hon. Gentleman's personal imputations against the character and behaviour of my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Wales. I do not believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has acted in this matter with any discourtesy. I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's strictures.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The right hon. Gentleman will be aware, even if he does not share the concern of many people, of the failure of the Department of the Environment and the Scottish Office to publish adequate information on radiation levels during the Chernobyl incident. Is he aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) asked in a written question about maximum radiation levels which was answered in yesterday's *Hansard?* In that written answer, the Department of the Environment failed to do more than give details of average levels of radiation. Of course, those details are totally useless. Do the Government intend withholding information, or will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that Members of Parliament have access to such information?

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Scotland have acted with great sensitivity and responsibility in this matter. I do not accept that there has been any sort of radiation information cover up. Of course, I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's anxieties to them.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 844, which is supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House about the Charity Shield 1986?

[That this House, appreciating the excellent crowd behaviour, the true sportsmanship and the high standard of entertainment by the Everton and Liverpool football teams at the 1986 Cup Final, calls upon the Minister for Sport to ask the Football Association to allow Everton to participate in the 1986 Charity Shield; notes that Everton were runners-up in the First Division championship and the Challenge Cup and were participants in the 1984 and 1985 Charity Shield with similar excellent crowd behaviour, and rejects the suggestion that a foreign team should replace Everton in this traditional English charity event.]

We are delighted that Everton football club, and not a foreign team, will participate in the matches. Has the right hon. Gentleman seen early-day motion 840, which was tabled by, among others, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), which concerns the excellent behaviour of the Liverpool and Everton football clubs at the 1986 Football Association cup final?

[That this House congratulates Liverpool Football Club's team under Kenny Dalglish's managership, in winning the 1986 Football Association Cup Final; further congratulates Everton Football Club's team, under Howard Kendall's managership, for their great football and fine team spirit; believes that both teams and their supporters are a real credit to football in the United Kingdom and to the people of the City of Liverpool and Merseyside in particular; notes that the behaviour of the Liverpool and Everton football supporters at Wembley deserve praise from the police, proving that football crowds can be good-humoured and well-behaved and that they need not involve themselves in any form of violence; and concludes that the way in which almost half a million of the people of Liverpool turned out, Liverpool, Everton and non-club supporters alike, to greet the two clubs on their return to Liverpool, is proof beyond doubt that, despite all the problems of the Merseyside area, the spirit of the people remains good and that they deserve the support of the whole country.]

Will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Minister with responsibility for sport to make representations to the FA to support the re-entry of English teams in European competitions in the 1987-88 season?

Mr. Biffen: Because we all like to get on this bandwagon, I should like to say that I congratulate Merseyside on a good year for football, whatever else has happened.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): What about Shrewsbury?

Mr. Biffen: I have not congratulated Shrewsbury. I am showing a shrewd sense of realism. If one lives in Oswestry, one is as likely to look north-west as south-east. I shall, of course, take up the hon. Gentleman's other point with my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it not true that someone on the Select Committee on the Environment has lied and, and in doing so, has dropped a journalist in the cart?

Mr. Biffen: I think that that is a point to be made in Tuesday evening's debate.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Does the right hon. Gentleman remember that, two weeks ago, I asked him to put in the Library a copy of the contract for the Trident submarine or to hold a debate on the issue? I in no way doubt the strenuousness of the right hon. Gentleman's efforts to fulfil either or both of those requests, but does not his inability to achieve this show the type of difficulties that the *Daily Mirror* has had to face in obtaining information about the sinking of the Sheffield? Should not a Defence Minister make a public statement in the House about the serious allegations in today's *Daily Mirror* about the deaths of 20 service men, if only to comfort the parents and families of those poor men?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman has taken up the point raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), although the hon. Gentleman seeks a statement. I shall, of course, refer his request to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): In a comment which appears now to have been a long time ago, the Leader of the House upheld yesterday's remarks to me by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—notably that, if orders from China and Cuba were consummated, Smith's Dock on Teesside and other shipyards would remain open. That is very good news for my constituents who live in Middlesbrough. The information that we are negotiating with Cuba for an order for four vessels is most welcome. Will the right hon. Gentleman draw the attention of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to those facts? Will they be included in the debate next week?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of the hon. Gentleman's points. I shall certainly convey his remarks to my right hon. Friend.

Prime Minister's Question Time

4.35 pm

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowne and Stourbridge): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this afternoon you made some remarks about the conduct of the House during Prime Minister's Question Time. If I heard you correctly, you said—I am merely paraphrasing—that a certain amount of noise was inevitable in view of our customs and traditions, and that cheering was in order. I think that those remarks will have been heard with dismay by the many hundreds of thousands of those who listen to "Today in Parliament" or "Yesterday in Parliament", who think that already there is far too much noise during Prime Minister's Questions.

Not only foreigners, but English people, cannot understand it when, before the Prime Minister has time to reply to an Opposition question, there is so much shouting on the Opposition Benches that she has to repeat herself two or three times and shout. That happens in no other country or kingdom. Although I am all in favour of rumbustiousness here, surely what happens during Prime Minister's Question Time has gone too far and should be reined in.

Mr. Speaker: As the hon. Member has raised this point, I point out that I was making a distinction between cheering and jeering.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I realise that piety and self-righteousness are not among the attributes of the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes). He appeared in his last contribution to stray, giving the impression that this side of the House is guilty of conduct that is inclined or intended to drown the contributions of the Prime Minister or of any other hon. Member. If the hon. Government were prepared to acknowledge—I note that he is listening—that this is a general fault, frequently repeated by the Conservative Benches, perhaps we could raise the standards of conduct by Government example.

Mr. Speaker: I subscribe to those views. Prime Minister's answers should generally be heard in greater silence. The point I was trying to make was that the "Hear, hears"—which are, I understand, the true interpretation of "Hear him", or perhaps even "Hear her"—have been traditional in the House for many centuries.

Special Development Order

4.37 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance on your powers under Standing Order No. 4. As you will know, from what my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said, next Wednesday we are to have a debate on the NIREX special development order. You may feel that there is a cosy agreement between the two Front Benches to limit the debate to one and a half hours. This may be because the Labour party, too, supports the policy of disposing of low-level nuclear waste in a shallow burial facility. It is the policy of the Liberal Chief Whip as well.

A number of constituencies are affected, and Fulbeck in my constituency is included. Our constituents would never forgive the House if their case was not fully argued. Under Standing Order No. 4, the debate on a prayer of this type ends automatically at 11.30 pm. As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, you have a residual discretion under the provisions of the Standing Order, if you hold that this is an important matter which has not been adequately discussed, to adjourn the debate for further argument. If the representatives of the affected constituencies——

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): And those of neighbouring constituencies.

Mr. Hogg: —and the representatives of neighbouring constituencies—they will be the only ones putting the argument—are not called, will you consider sympathetically an invitation to invoke your residual power to adjourn the debate?

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical question. Of course I shall do that; I always do.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure you will have noticed the number of requests made to the Leader of the House. It is reasonable to assume that all those hon. Members might seek to catch your eye during that debate. During a one and a half-hour debate, it is reasonable to assume that not all those who this afternoon have made the case for a longer debate will be called, and they will very much welcome you using your power under the Standing Order referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). I urge you to recognise that the debate on Wednesday is the only opportunity that we have to draw to the attention of the House the total and unanimous opposition of large numbers of people in four communities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was under the impression earlier today that we were to have a three-hour debate on that prayer. I do not know from where I gathered that view. I had to be corrected by my hon. Friend the Chief Whip of the Parliamentary Labour party. If it would assist in any way, may I say that I and my right hon. and hon. Friends are disposed to agree to the prolongation of that debate, as this issue is of considerable importance to both sides of the House. I hope that even without invoking your intervention the Government will reconsider their business. I am sure that a three-hour debate would bring widespread satisfaction.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is an important matter and you are about to give an important ruling. You might at this stage say that you will adjourn the debate, because there are no Members of the Liberal party in the Chamber. They clearly do not care at all about the matter that we are to debate.

Mr. Speaker: That is also a hypothetical question. It may be of some comfort to the hon. Gentleman to know that during the debate I shall certainly bear in mind those who were not called in previous debates.

Spring Adjournment (Debates)

Mr. Speaker: I remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Friday 23 May up to eight hon. Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the result will be made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Orders of the Day

Wages Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

New Clause 1

YOUNG PEOPLE

'Employers of workers under the age of 21 who undertake the same work as adults who are protected by Wages Councils Orders made under Part II of the Act shall pay such workers at least 70 per cent. of the minimum rate laid down in the Order and shall charge no more for accommodation than is allowable for adult workers.'.—*[Ms. Clare Short.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.42 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 2—*Disabled workers*—

'The provisions of Part II of this Act shall not apply to registered disabled workers.'.

Amendment No. 54, in clause 12, page 12, line 4, at beginning insert—

'With the exception of the special protection provided for registered disabled workers.'.

Amendment No. 58, in clause 12, page 12, line 23, leave out subsection (3).

Amendment No. 81, in clause 13, page 12, line 35, at end insert—

'*(aa)* the welfare of mentally or physically disabled workers in relation to whom the Wages Council concerned would cease to operate'.

Ms. Short: Today we move on to part II of the Wages Bill. Yesterday we made it clear that part I would lead to many workers, innocent of any offence, facing fines and deductions from their pay and having no adequate remedy to deal with that. It will also force many workers who are currently paid in cash and wish to continue to be paid in that way to move, without negotiation or consultation, to cashless pay. All of that is bad enough. We now move to part II of the Bill, which is much worse.

It is designed to cut the wages of some of Britain's poorest workers. There are about 3 million of them, and all of them will suffer. They are the workers protected by wages councils—special machinery established long ago and supported by all political parties to ensure that some of the poorest workers do not see ever-worsening rates of pay as worse and worse employers move into industry and undermine the pay that decent employers wish to give.

The Government are determined to change the little protection that those workers have. They say that it is necessary to cut the pay of the poorest workers in order to create more jobs. That is not true. If we all took a cut in pay there would be more unemployment and further deflation of the economy. Of course, part of the current problem is that the economy is too deflated already. It is obvious, on all international comparisons, that Britain's wages are very low.

The Government argue that we would compete better internationally if our wages dropped even further, so their argument is that we must compete with some of the poorest countries in the world paying incredibly low rates. That points us towards a real sweat-shop economy instead of towards the virtuous cycle that we should adopt of high investment, high skill training and high wages.

If the Government believe that thesis—we do not accept that wage cuts will create more jobs—why do they not ask those who can afford it best to accept wage cuts? Since the Government came to power the 20 per cent. of best paid workers have increased their incomes considerably. They have experienced considerable tax cuts which, accompanied by an increase in earnings have, led to an enormous increase in their standard of living. The lowest paid 20 per cent. of workers have, since 1979, seen a net drop in their standard of living. The increase in their pay has been less than the rate of inflation, and they are poorer now than they were in 1979.

The Government tell us that the rich need more incentives in order to work harder and in order that our economy should be more efficient. They have the cheek to tell us that the poorest workers should be paid less in order to help to deal with the problem of unemployment. That is outrageous. It is pure dogma and there is no evidence for their case. It is an attack on the poorest workers.

New clause 1 deals with the attack on the young. Five hundred thousand of the 3 million poorest workers are young workers, one in five of all young workers in Britain. The Government propose that in future there will be no protection for young workers. One would think that the opposite would be the case. One would think that in any decent country there would be care and concern to ensure that the young, who lack experience and might be more easily exploited, are protected when they first go to work so that they can start their adult working life within decent structures and with decent working conditions.

The International Labour Organisation was deeply shocked by Britain's move. We had to resile from the treaty so that the Government could introduce this legislation. The ILO told us:

"Almost all countries in the world now operate a minimum wage system and none to our knowledge excludes young workers."

Therefore, all the developed countries of the world and many Third-world countries manage to have a minimum wage system to protect their young workers. Henceforth, Britain does not intend to do so.

A myth has been put about simply by the constant repetition of the falsehood that high youth unemployment in Britain is due to high youth wages. That does not stand up to scrutiny. The movement of youth wages over a long period of time does not show that there is any connection between movement in youth wages and movement in youth unemployment. In fact, since 1979 youth unemployment has doubled and youth wages have dropped considerably. Of course, the Government are not content with that and wish to see even further drops in the pay of our young people.

What are the princely sums that the Government consider too high? The sums allocated to young workers under existing wage orders are £40 to £50 per week. I do not know whether Conservative Members understand that after tax and national insurance and after bus fares and meals have been paid for, the young people are left with very little more than they would receive on supplementary benefit. They are working for very little simply because they wish to work.

In Committee we witnessed crocodile tears about the Tory party's concern for the young unemployed. Conservative Members told us how deeply worried they were and how the only answer for our young people was that their wages should be cut so that more of them might get jobs. It is true that our young people are desperate. It is true, for example, that the suicide rate for young people is rising faster than for any other age group. It was proved, I believe, by research studies at Leicester university a couple of years ago that there is a link between youth unemployment and the suicide rate among our young people. There is no doubt that they are desperate and that they are suffering. The Government intend to exploit that desperation to lever their wages down even further.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): In Committee, the hon. Lady consistently misrepresented that argument. Surely the purpose is not to push down young people's wages; it is to attempt to create more jobs for young people by not setting artificially high minimum wage levels. It is entirely different.

Ms. Short: The argument is exactly the same. The words that are used are different. The hon. Gentleman says that if youth wages go down, there will be more jobs. That means that young people who are in work now on low wages will get lower wages. There is no evidence that there will be more jobs for young people. Inevitably, the poor low-paid young worker will be even poorer and even lower paid. At the moment wages councils set rates for them. The Government say that those rates are too high and want lower rates to be set. That is the purpose of the part of the Bill that we are contesting in the new clause.

The Government have been at this for a long time. They have tried all sorts of measures to lever down youth wages. The first was the deliberate adoption of policies to increase unemployment and make workers, including young people, settle for lower wages. The most blatant was the young workers scheme, which gave a massive subsidy to encourage employers to cut youth wages—£15 a week if they paid less than £40, under the scheme's initial form. We learned from that that a high proportion of the jobs that were subsidised would have existed anyway. So the whole expensive scheme was not generating new jobs.

Of the jobs that were generated—about 10 or 20 per cent. at most of the jobs that were subsidised—the vast majority were previously adult jobs. An adult was thrown out of work so that a young subsidised worker could be taken on. In so far as the Government's proposal creates a marginal increase in jobs for young people, it is at the expense of adult workers. The mothers will be thrown out. There is an overwhelming number of women workers in low-paid employment. They will be thrown out of work so that young people can be taken on at disgracefully low rates of pay. They in turn will be thrown out when they reach 21 so that some other desperate young person can be taken on for an unacceptably low rate of pay.

New clause 2 refers to disabled people. There are many disabled young workers. Under the Wages Councils Act 1979 scheme, disabled workers had to be paid the legally required rates unless there was an application for an exemption, arguing that there was some reason why a disabled worker could not work as efficiently as another. All wages councils were careful to ensure that disabled workers were not exploited. Only about 80 licences per year were granted to enable employers to pay less than the legal minimum rate. In sweeping away the protection for all workers under 21, the Government are sweeping away protection for disabled young workers and saying that it is a free market and that employers can exploit young disabled people as much as they like and pay them whatever they like. It is a free rein for the market. It is outrageous and sickening.

The Government pretend that they are making the change because they care for the young and want to help them to work. It is not true. If it were, there would be a change in economic policy. Without that, we shall not acccept any argument from the Tory Benches that pretends for one minute that they have any concern for the unemployed. The truth is that, all over the developed world, when unemployment rises, youth unemployment rises more rapidly because young workers are marginal and lack skills and experience. When employers are not recruiting, it is the young whom they will not recruit first. The way in which to reduce youth unemployment is to lower the general level of unemployment. In every developed country, when unemployment falls, youth unemployment falls rapidly. The only way in which young workers will get back into jobs is through a change of economic policy which generates jobs for all young people.

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): I thought that by now the hon. Lady would have accepted the economic realities of life. If what she says were so, why, in Germany, where there are more realistic wage levels for young people, is youth unemployment about the same proportion as general unemployment, whereas in this country it is about twice as high?

Ms. Short: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is not well informed about Germany. Rising unemployment hit Germany later than it hit this country. The application of monetarism came to it later. When unemployment rose, youth unemployment rose too. The pattern is the same throughout the EEC: a study of some years ago documents it.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): May I add to my hon. Friend's explanation? The Tories put forward the fallacy that young people's wages as a proportion of adult rates are less in Germany than in this country. That fallacy is clouded by the fact that the hourly manufacturing earnings of workers in Germany are at least 40 per cent. higher than in this country. The reason why unemployment rose at a slower pace in Germany is that in the late 1970s and early 1980s the Government expelled over 1 million gastarbeiter back to countries such as Spain and Turkey. Is that the Tories' solution—to expel 1 million of the immigrant workers in this country to reduce unemployment?

Ms. Short: I am sure that hon. Members are listening to my hon. Friend's points.

The Government's policy is immoral. It is immoral to attack the poorest and to seek to generate greater inequality. The Government have achieved a massive increase in inequality since 1979. The Bill is intended to take it further and make poor workers even poorer. It is based on an economic fiction. The Labour party is absolutely opposed to everything that the Government are seeking to do in part II. We are committed to reversing it.

[Ms. Short]

The way things are going, we expect to do it quite soon. We in the Labour party will introduce a national minimum wage with appropriate rates for young people.

The Tory party should be deeply ashamed of itself in seeking to attack the living standards of the poor, the young, young black workers, women workers and disabled workers. That is what they are doing in part II. New clause 1 is an attempt to reverse some of that damage.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): We intend to have a reasonably short debate, but this is an important issue which goes to the root of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will reply to the debate and concentrate on the new clause and amendments concerned with disabled workers.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) has just made her case on behalf of the Labour party, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) said, she puts the case for and against the Bill in a curious way. The Government have made it clear throughout that our objective in introducing the Bill is to increase employment opportunities, particularly for young people. Although the hon. Lady speaks with considerable passion, I cannot believe that she really thinks that we are motivated by a curious desire to drive down wages for its own sake or to extend the rate of poverty. The language that she uses always implies that.

More worrying than the eccentricity of approach that that betrays is the fact that the hon. Lady seems to be going back to a position where she almost completely denies any link between rates of pay and employment prospects. She brushes aside remarks about comparative rates of pay for young people and employment——

Mr. Nellist *indicated assent.*

Mr. Clarke: I see the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) nodding vigorous assent. I shall come back to that matter in a moment. I wonder where the new realism of the Labour party has gone. We are back into a new higher wage campaign regardless of the impact on employment in general, and particularly that of young people.

New clause 1 goes in totally the opposite direction to our proposal to enable young and inexperienced workers to take a wage that is more likely to induce the employer to offer them their first step into the labour market. The new clause suggests that we should retain an arbitrarily fixed rate of pay for young people who are regarded as undertaking the same work as adults. It does not explain how on earth we shall determine whether the young person is doing the same work as an adult, but, from remarks made yesterday, it appears that we shall have something along the lines of equal value for equal work being determined by tribunals.

The new clause suggests that a definite relationship between young people's earnings and those of adult workers should be fixed by the wages councils, which is not so at the moment. It says that at least 70 per cent. of the adult rate should be paid to 16 and 17-year-olds. That is driving up the relationship between young people's and adult wages, compared with the present position. No fixed minimum for young people is provided for in the existing legislation. The existing wages orders lay down an average of about 65 per cent. of the adult wage for 16-year-olds The Labour party's new clause would immediately increase the pay of those who have come straight out of school and bring it nearer to the pay of experienced adult workers. The hon. Member for Ladywood speaks with great sincerity and passion, but she is fervently arguing for a change which would deny job opportunities to very many young people.

5 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The Paymaster General must know that a three-year apprenticeship for young people is recognised by certain industries. If somebody leaves school at 16 and completes a three-year apprenticeship, he could be doing the work of a skilled worker before he reached the age of 21. Is the Paymaster General saying that the employer will pass on to the customer the saving that he makes by employing a young worker or will he put it into his own pocket? That would be exploitation.

Mr. Clarke: There is nothing to prevent employers in any industry from moving a young employee on to the full adult wage as soon as that employee is making as full a contribution as an adult worker. Apprenticeships lead people on to fully qualified craft rates, but that does not apply to wages council industries. Apprenticeships do not need to be backed by law. We are dealing with a provision that would make it obligatory for a 16-year-old to be paid 70 per cent. of the adult wage. Given the choice, all employers would prefer to employ an experienced adult worker rather than a young worker. The Labour party's policy would make it illegal to offer somebody a lower wage while he was training and acquiring a skill. We believe that as soon as he is able to do all that an adult worker can do, he should receive the adult worker's wage.

Ms. Clare Short: A number of different formulations are included in this series of amendments. The Labour party is seeking to maintain protection for young people. The Labour party suggests that we should stay with the 1979 Act and give each wages council the right to pay young people whatever rate it thinks fit. The Paymaster General will be aware that a number of wages councils are unhappy about his proposals, particularly about the movement of the age of majority from 18 to 21. Therefore, he should not concentrate on the provisions of new clause 1. The Opposition would settle for a return to the 1979 Act.

Mr. Clarke: I am relieved to hear that the hon. Lady is showing a little flexibility. However, I do not believe that she is protecting young people. She is telling young people who work in these industries that they will all get higher pay, but she will deny job opportunities to many of them. That is not protection.

The new clause is part of the initiative against low pay which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) mentioned yesterday, and it is closely attached to part II. Yesterday the Labour party may have called it a campaign against low pay, but I prefer to call in the Labour party's new campaign for higher pay, particularly higher pay for the young, the inexperienced, and the unskilled.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East) *rose——*

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

I have in front of me a copy of the hon. Gentleman's news release, in which he explained that he was setting out the Labour party's new approach. According to his definition, no fewer than 8 million people receive poverty wages. That is one third of the entire work force. His policy would raise the pay of those 8 million people—a third of the entire work force—and it would depend upon a combination of measures. In particular, it would depend upon the level of the statutory minimum wage. The hon. Gentleman yesterday, and the hon. Member for Ladywood today, made it quite clear that the Labour party is committed to that policy. If we are to raise the wages of a third of the work force, at some stage the hon. Lady ought to tell us what level of pay increase she proposes, and what impact this campaign for higher pay for 8 million people will have on the rest of the work force. I refer to adult workers, male workers and workers with skills.

Yesterday the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East was at pains to assure those workers that they, too, would share in this bonanza. He said that the Labour party's policy would not hold anybody back. A national minimum wage would provide a floor below which no worker would be allowed to fall and that, as unions would still be able to negotiate above that floor, there would be no danger of it becoming a ceiling for pay settlements. No mention was made yesterday of productivity, performance or output.

The Labour party's campaign is designed to inform people that a third of the labour force will receive higher pay. If that is associated with the hon. Gentleman's remarks about changes to trade union legislation, it means that it will be rather easier for those who want to maintain their differentials to take industrial action. The strike weapon will be strengthened to ensure that they are able to maintain those differentials.

This drive for generally higher pay throughout the economy, particularly at the bottom end of the scale, has come at a time when employment in this country is increasing at a faster rate than ever before. Since the spring of 1983, nearly 1 million new jobs have been created. The most worrying threat to the creation of new jobs is higher unit labour costs in this country compared with those in other countries. I have the comparisons in front of me. The latest quarterly figures that are available for 1985 show that in Canada wages and salaries per unit of output in manufacturing increased by 1 per cent., in the Federal Republic of Germany by 2 per cent. and in the United Kingdom by 6 per cent., whereas in Japan they did not rise at all. If one takes the whole-year figures for 1984, our unit wage costs in manufacturing increased by 4 per cent., whereas they declined by 2 per cent. in Canada, by 1 per cent. in the United States, by 4 per cent. in Japan and by 1 per cent. in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way on that matter?

Mr. Clarke: The Labour party is campaigning for a general surge in wage costs at a time when our unit wage costs in manufacturing are rising at a faster rate than those of our competitors, when the living standards of those who are in work in this country are higher than ever before and when domestic inflation is falling rapidly.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: This policy will not protect the low-paid, the young, or anybody else. If the Labour party embarked upon this policy, it would drive up unemployment.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Paymaster General not aware that there are two halves to a fraction? If industrial manufacturing output has declined, the equation will naturally be higher. If he looks at his answers to me during the last few days relating to the hourly earnings of workers in manufacturing industry in Britain, Italy, France and Germany, he will find that the pay of workers in those countries has risen faster than in this country and that it has been based upon higher investment.

Mr. Clarke: If there is one thing that is more likely than anything else to cause a fall in manufacturing output in this country, it is to allow our unit wage costs to rise in comparison with those of our competitors. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to ignore our competitive position, he is encouraging a decline in our manufacturing industry.

Mr. Maples: On my right hon. and learned Friend's point about the Labour party's proposals for massive pay increases, I should point out that this experiment was put into effect in 1974. Under a Labour Government there was a massive rise in wages, but there was no rise in production. The Labour Government then found that they had to deal with the problems that they had created by introducing a statutory pay policy.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. There was a similar experiment in France a few years ago.

Mr. Prescott *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I apologise to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. I promised to give way to him, and I shall do so now, but before he rises I shall ask him whether the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook, (Mr. Hattersley) was consulted about this campaign yesterday, and whether his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition is involved in this new policy of driving up wage costs in British industry? How does all this fit in with the current attempts to make Labour appear to be a credible alternative Government? It seems to me that the Labour party is not to be trusted either on pay policy or on the trade union front. We are back to policies being advocated that will have a completely destructive effect upon employment in this country.

Mr. Prescott: It may come as a shock to the Paymaster General to learn that these Benches are the Opposition and not the Government. We are debating the Government's Bill. We have heard much rhetoric from the Minister about the number of strikes, but more days have been lost through strikes under this Government than in the five years of Labour Government. The Minister knows that, because he gave that information in a parliamentary reply.

We are discussing 8 million people who are under the poverty wage level, and that is the reality. A Council of Europe convention determines that low pay is two thirds of an industrial wage. I am surprised that the Minister is not aware of that, because we were at the Council of Europe at the same time. That convention determines the poverty level. Yesterday we said that the number of people paid poverty wages had doubled since the Government came to power in 1979. We argued that there was a need for legislation, and the new clause is concerned with that need.

[Mr. Prescott]

This is only an intervention and I cannot take up all the time of the debate but I wish to comment on the Minister's statement that too much money is paid to youngsters and to deal with the 70 per cent. wage level referred to in new clause 1. Is the Minister aware that in hairdressing, 70 per cent. of the adult wage rate would be about £44? Is £44 too much to pay youngsters in 1986?

Mr. Clarke: One interpretation of the Council of Europe's convention produces the figure of 8 million to which the hon. Gentleman referred and to which his policies, set out yesterday, are most especially directed. The figure of 70 per cent. of the wage level, which the Labour party would restore to young people, would produce a comparatively low figure as a legal minimum in some industries. However, in Germany, the proportion of young people's incomes to that of adults is much lower. When people take their first job they have little to offer but enthusiasm and the hope of acquiring skill and experience. They must expect to receive lower pay in relation to adults and in comparison to what they will receive when they have acquired their skills.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East objects to our debating his policies, but, with respect, we are discussing the subject matter of the debate, which is the new clause put forward by the Labour party. The Labour party advocates that we should have a statutory minimum wage level for young people. It is plainly part of the policy —the fair pay policy—which was set out by the hon. Gentleman and by the hon. Member for Ladywood to drive up the pay costs of British industry on a substantial scale. In our opinion, that would sacrifice many jobs.

Our policy is quite straightforward. The earnings taken out of industry by any workers have to be based on the value that the worker can put into that industry. The success of the worker helps his company to succeed in the market place, including the world market place. Higher wages are a desirable objective for most people, but they must come from better performance. Our latest proposal is a concept of profit sharing. This would encourage industry and those working in a particular industry, and thus the rewards are more closely linked to the success or otherwise of the enterprise.

The young person who is trying to take his or her first step in the labour market certainly needs to be protected, and I agree entirely with such protection. In my view, they need to be protected against the risk of being priced out of a job. That is a risk which they would run if the wages councils provision, as advocated in the new clause, was adopted, or a national minimum wage, as canvassed by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, was adopted.

I ask the House to reject new clause 1 and accept the link between pay and employment. If the Labour party rejects that link, it will be folly in the extreme. The hon. Member for Ladywood tries to refute any link between present employment and pay by citing the figures which she always cites. She argues that since 1979 there has been an increase in youth unemployment. These figures take in the full winds of the recession since 1979, but youth unemployment has not risen by as much as it has in other sections of the population. The fall in earnings of young people vis-à-vis adults has taken place only since about 1982. Ever since young people have followed the policies encouraged by the Government and taken a lower proportion of the adult wage, the percentage of young people unemployed has decreased. The position of young people has improved.

5.15 pm

Between April 1982 and April 1985 the average annual increase of earnings for the under-18s has been 5·7 per cent., while for those aged 18 and over it has been 8 per cent. The number of unemployed under-18s as a proportion of the total unemployed has fallen. In January 1983 it was 6·9 per cent., in January 1984 it was 6·4 per cent., in January 1985 it was 5·9 per cent. and in January 1986 it was 5·5 per cent. I am pleased that the overall unemployment rate for under-18s has fallen.

Mr. Nellist: It is called YTS.

Mr. Clarke: In this period when the earnings of youngsters have gone up more slowly than have earnings for adults, the unemployment rates for under-18s has fallen. In January 1983 the figure was 25·2 per cent., in January 1984 it was 21·3 per cent., in January 1985 it was 20 per cent. and in January 1986 it was 19·1 per cent.

The hon. Member for Ladywood bitterly attacked the young workers scheme, but that has created, on any analysis, 120,000 additional jobs for young people, even allowing for displacement, which of course would in part modify the result. The number of unemployed under-20s has fallen by 63,000 since 1983. That is over 10 per cent. of the total. Youth unemployment is decreasing. The level has come down with the help of the youth training scheme, the young workers scheme and the new workers scheme.

There has been a growing realisation in industry that young people's wages must bear a sensible relationship to adult wages if people are to be given their first job.— *[Interruption.]* The very mention of youth training always causes excitement. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East and his colleagues must face the experience of the past four years, when unemployment among young people has been falling steadily. They have responded to that by mounting a virulent campaign which is a combination of a weakening commitment to YTS and driving up pay costs. That would drive up youth unemployment. I believe that their campaign is thoroughly misconceived and irresponsible. The irresponsibility is wrapped up in the guise of a low-wage campaign. The Labour party cannot be trusted in this area. The claim that the Labour party has a sensible economic policy is incredible when its employment team is let loose advocating this type of inflationary and anti-job nonsense.

Mr. Nellist: I arrived in this Chamber almost three years ago as one of the youngest Members elected at the election of 1983. I am the youngest Member to be returned to Parliament by the city of Coventry since Coventry has had Members of Parliament. Therefore, it is natural that, over the years, I have spent much of that time defending young workers against the ravages of the Government and their pathological hatred for young people.

I have had special responsibility to champion the hopes and aspirations of millions of young workers in the face of mass youth unemployment. The three months I have spent on the Bill have not changed or disavowed my opinions in one respect. There was an unreal atmosphere about the speech of the Paymaster General. I might hope that it was his last speech, but that would be too much to hope for. In Committee there were many platitudes about

how the measures were designed to support and provide jobs for young people. Frankly, nobody outside the Chamber and very few inside it believe that. The Bill is designed to continue the trend of driving down the wages of young people so that the profits of those who financially backed the Tory party at the last general election are suitably enhanced.

What is the real world, away from those platitudes? The real world should interest the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), in whose constituency I was brought up. Its careers office has a little story in this morning's *Daily Star* under the headline:

"I gotta job! Joy for girl in 5,000"

It reads:

"Lucky Karen Sanderson has beaten 5,000 other desperate youngsters to get the only job going in the dole capital of mainland Britain.

The Cleveland careers service had only one unfilled vacancy to satisfy 5,278 registered unemployed."

No fewer than 55,000 people are unemployed, and 36 per cent. of them are under 25. The principal careers officer said:

"The day the young girl came in for a job we had only one available. Today we have only eight jobs available for all those thousands of youngsters needing work. We have another 4,000 young people on youth training schemes. But they will be looking for real jobs in a year or two. We know that 65 per cent. of folk coming off YTS projects can't find real jobs."

That is the real world that the Chamber must deal with if it is to have any relevance to the hundreds of thousands of young people who remain unemployed under the present Prime Minister and the Government.

Matters are equally grim in my city of Coventry, where 5,000 more youngsters will leave school this summer. I telephoned our careers office today. We are better off than Cleveland: we have 76 vacancies. That still leaves 4,924 young people without a job. We already have more than 5,000 unemployed young people competing for the same jobs. Among them are young people leaving special schools. They might be mentioned in the debate on new clause 2.

We had a brilliant year in Coventry last year. Of the 189 physically and mentally handicapped youngsters who left special schools, seven found work. Two of them went to sheltered work. That was better than the previous year, when only two found work. What hope will the handicapped youngsters of Coventry have when another 190 leave this summer? It might be suggested that, if the seven who got jobs took a wage cut, there might be an extra one or two jobs for those who leave school this summer. That is economic and political rubbish.

One ward in my constituency has an official male unemployment level of 44·2 per cent. In reality, it is well above 50 per cent. That is the situation in Coventry. There is no future for young people in our city, the midlands or the country as a whole, short of getting a genuine Socialist Labour Government prepared to plan the economy rationally and to guarantee young people jobs.

Under this Prime Minister, half a million young people have never had a job since they left school. Ten years ago, 61 per cent. of 16-year-olds had a job. Only 18 per cent. have a job now. The studies, the projections and the computer models that were wheeled before us in Committee to support abolishing young people's right to a minimum wage could only come up with a prediction that between two and 160 jobs could be created in Coventry, South-East, or between eight and 600 jobs could be created for the whole of Coventry if all the 500,000 young people took a pay cut. So what?

In the month before Christmas, a factory in Coventry —General Electric Company—the chairman of which is the Tory Member of Parliament for Waveney (Mr. Prior), declared 1,000 redundancies, the bulk of them in my constituency. One half of the Tory party is chucking people out of work while the pious hopes of the other half urge young people to take wage cuts to try to create jobs.

No other country has done what the Paymaster General is asking us to do — to denounce the International Labour Organisation convention No. 26 and deny young people the right to a legal minimum wage. His justification is that they should take lower wages to create more jobs —that we should "price young people into jobs". Will that happen? Nye Bevan used to ask, "Why look in the crystal ball when you can read the book?"

Sir J. Hoskins talked about the real aim of the youth training scheme when he was in the Prime Minister's private office. It is on the record. It was to increase the differential between youth and adult wages. That has happened. When the youth opportunities programme allowance was introduced in 1978, youngsters were on £19·50 a week. The YTS equivalent today is £7·30. If it had increased with the retail price index, youngsters would now be on £38 a week, and if the allowance had increased in line with average earnings, they would be on £44 a week. In other words, school leavers have taken a £17 a week pay cut in the past eight years while youth unemployment has trebled.

There is no evidence to support the argument that cutting wages creates jobs. The Minister might assert that there is a link. If there is, why is the highest unemployment not in Sweden and the lowest unemployment not in India? Half a million young people will get pay cuts unless new clause 1 is accepted. That means one in five young people in a job or one in three school leavers in their first job. The average wages of these people is about £50 a week—in hairdressing it is just above £30 a week for a first-year apprentice.

I notice—this is a bit of a constitutional oddity—that the Prince of Wales' consent is needed before the Bill will get Royal Assent. I do not suppose that he has ever had to live on £40 a week. There is a huge disparity between the very rich and the half million young workers in service industries such as hotels, restaurants, catering, clothing and hairdressing. The Government's hypocrisy is revealed by the fact that one day in July they said that young people must price themselves into a job and the next the Prime Minister talked of the need for recruitment, retention, motivation and morale among the 2,000 judges, generals and top civil servants who needed a 40 per cent. increase in their salaries, taking the Cabinet Secretary's salary up by £500 a week.

We cannot take the Bill entirely in isolation. It is part of a process to create a conveyor belt of school leavers, leaving school, doing two years on YTS for artificially depressed training allowances—cheap labour rates—and doing another three years before they reach the maturity accorded to them by the Government at 21, when they will get an adult rate of pay. To ensure compliance, the Department of Health and Social Security has issued circular CS/INF/YTS/7/85, paragraph 18 of which instructs careers officers to inform the DHSS if a youngster refuses to go on a youth training scheme, whereupon they

[Mr. Nellist]

will get a six-week cut in benefit. At least it was six weeks until about 10 days ago when the Secretary of State said that it would be a 13-weeks penalisation.

Next week — perhaps next Monday night — the Secretary of State will introduce a £5·80 cut in the supplementary benefit level for the under-18s. Just to tidy it all up, if youngsters object, or try to organise themselves into a trade union to enhance wages and conditions, they can be dismissed without recourse to an industrial tribunal if they have not worked two years full time or five years part time. That demonstrates the Government's pathological hatred of youth.

The Bill does not tackle the real causes of unemployment. The real cause is the refusal of those who own wealth to invest. That is why production is lower than it was in 1973. Investment has fallen, output has fallen, and we now import more factory-made goods than we export. It is the first time that the workshop of the world has done that for more than 300 years. That is why the gaps between us and other countries which the Minister likes to quote—Germany, America and Japan—have opened.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Nellist: I cannot. I apologise, but the signals are coming and I might be strangled by the Whips if I do not finish soon.

There has been a refusal to invest, so where will the profit come from—by driving down the wages of young people. There is enough money in the country to give everybody a decent wage. If we brought back some of the £70 billion that has gone abroad during the past six years, there would be enough to pay decent wages.

We want to offer a real job to young people. We are not advocating their donning smocks and showing American tourists around the Tower of London, which is what the Tory Government are turning us to in the 1980s. The wages councils were set up 75 years ago. We are trying to give young people a little protection, but I shall vote for the new clause in the Division. The new clause will have more bite if other policies of the Labour party and the Trades Union Congress, such as a national minimum wage of two-thirds average earnings, are implemented.

I shall put that into figures for the Paymaster General. It would require a wage of £120 a week for adult workers. If 70 per cent. of that was offered to young workers, they would be lifted out of the poverty trap. Half a million youngsters would then have a decent rate of pay and 8 million adults would look forward to the future, and be able to afford a holiday, a television, to run a car and other things which are necessities in Britain today.

On 31 May thousands of workers, principally women, will demonstrate, rally and march in Manchester under the banner of the North-West Region Labour Women's Council, demanding a national minimum wage and a mass recruitment campaign to trade unions and the Labour party of young workers who are affected by this provision. I hope that a repeat of such campaigns will signal the death knell of the Tory Government and the low-wage, cheap-labour economy, on which their big business backers depend for their luxury life styles.

It ill behoves the Paymaster General who is on almost £1,000 a week to tell 500,000 hairdressers and other young people who work in hotels, shops, restaurants, catering and clothing establishments that £40 a week is too much for them in Maggie's Britain. I hope that the new clause is passed overwhelmingly tonight.

5.30 pm

Mr. Martin: I wish to speak to new clause 2 and amendment No. 81, both of which are in my name.

The Government propose to take young people out of the protection of the wages councils, but I urge them to reconsider their decision with regard to the physically and mentally handicapped. From my experience as a trade union officer and a councillor serving on the social work committee of the old Glasgow corporation, I know that young people, especially mentally handicapped young people, can be exploited. Some people will say that only a minority of employers will stoop so low, but if it were not for the minority of bad individuals in every respect, the House would not require legislation to protect the community.

I remember having to go to the Inverclyde local authority in Greenock because there was a complaint that some workers were not receiving a proper bonus. I discovered that the complaint was unjustified. The personnel officer had set one section aside for disabled and mentally handicapped workers and ensured that for 52 weeks of the year young people in that gardening section received a guaranteed bonus. During the summer that meant that able-bodied workers received a bigger bonus, which is how the complaint arose.

From conversations with the workers and the personnel officer, I discovered that he was doing a remarkable job. He did not require legislation, but he protected those young workers because he saw a need to do so. One worker could not read, so the personnel officer instructed the head gardener to draw up a plan of colours so that that worker would know the type of flowers to lay in a flower bed. He instructed a charge hand not to allow another worker to operate a motorised lawn mower because he knew that from time to time that worker had epileptic fits. Another worker turned up for work on holidays because he did not understand what holidays were. The personnel officer took it upon himself to phone that young man's parents to tell them that he should not turn up for work on the Queen's birthday and other public holidays. The personnel officer ensured that those workers were well protected, without any prompting.

On the other hand, there is the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, and I know that social workers are prepared to keep an eye on mentally handicapped workers who were in their care before they reached the age of maturity, which in Scotland is 16. I know of cases in the Strathclyde region where some of those workers are 50 and still receive help from the social work department. Social workers help those people mainly because from time to time cases are reported to them of workers who are being exploited, and who work long hours and are not paid proper wages for hard, heavy work in kitchens, hotels, and, sometimes, circuses. They are respectable people who do not understand their rights.

I could talk all night about the problems that arise with those workers. Surely, if we allow people to work, we should ensure that those who need protection are protected through legislation. We are failing in our duty if people in that category are exploited.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I am a little confused. The hon. Gentleman is arguing one case, but the amendment seems to imply another. It seeks to remove all disabled workers from part II. At least under part II there is a minimum provision, but the amendment seeks to remove it.

Mr. Martin: I am aware that time is short. I have explained my aims to the Minister, and if he feels that my new clause is defective he can, nevertheless, take my point on board. That is often the case with new clauses and amendments, but hon. Members are entitled to speak to them so that they can explain what they want, and if the Government can support the change it is up to them to ensure that the wording does not have the wrong effect.

The Minister may argue that if we introduce or tighten up legislation it will deter employers from exploiting mentally and physically handicapped people. There must be a balance between ensuring that we find as many young people a job as possible and ensuring that they are not exploited by unscrupulous employers. It should be remembered that employers do not always know what their workers' rights are, let alone that employees know their rights. Legislation should be available to help them when complaints are made.

Mr. Lawler: In stating that I have the honour to be president of the British Youth Council and chairman of the all-party youth affairs group — I stress that I do not speak in that capacity today — I hope that I can prove that I do not have a pathological hatred for young people. On the contrary, one thing that I have in common with the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) is that we are not so far out of that sector of our lives as are some hon. Members. Indeed, I suffer from the delusion sometimes that I am still in it.

One thing that regular contact with young people has taught me is that they have a far more realistic view of their worth and of economic realities than does the Labour party. One needs only to consider the high percentage of those who have expressed satisfaction with the youth training scheme and the opinion polls that have been conducted among young people to see the proof that they are willing to undertake work at sensible and realistic allowances. The Labour party's dogmatic approach will deny them the opportunity to undertake such work.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General said, the Opposition must think we believe that there is some political mileage in being vindictive against young people by driving down wages. No political party would seek to attack the living standards of young people. We are seeking to do the opposite. There is no lower standard of living for a young person than the dole or supplementary benefit. The proposed legislation seeks to improve young people's living standards by giving them jobs. That is the most significant step that they could take.

As my right hon. and learned Friend said, the effect of the new clause would be to increase the wages of 16 and 17-year-olds in industries covered by the wages councils. In the clothing industry it would mean an employer paying £49·49 insted of £46·06. In the retail food sector it would mean an employer paying £56 instead of £50·38. That would mean fewer jobs and a further falling behind in competitiveness at a time when all our major competitors pay a far lower proportion of wages to young people than we do. They pay 20 to 30 per cent. of adult wages, rather than our 60 to 70 per cent.

The new clause would also lessen the opportunities for training and cut the opportunities for young people to advance themselves. If companies must pay so much for young people, they will not spend more to train them. We must ensure that young people are recruited at sensible allowances, so that companies will invest time and money in them and enable then to make a more effective contribution to their employers.

The new clause would block young people's advancement. It is better that young people get on the first rung of the ladder. There is no career on the dole or any benefits structure that they can climb. The only way in which they can advance themselves is by getting their first job. and this legislation opens the door to employment opportunities.

The savings that employers could make by employing young people at more realistic wages could be used in two ways: first, to increase training; and, secondly, to pay more to skilled workers. I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) that skilled workers in Britain are paid less than those in competitor countries. In Germany workers are paid more because a much higher percentage of them have vocational qualifications and therefore contribute more to their companies and deserve higher wages.

The new clause would hit those who are least qualified and who find it hardest to get jobs. The Labour party is deserting what it has always claimed as its traditional ground and is aiming at the middle-class vote. However, the Conservative party has not forgotten the most disadvantaged and the least fortunate and is giving them an equal chance to prove themselves.

Half a million young people covered by the wages councils are affected by the Bill. Another 500,000 unemployed young people aged under 20 will also be affected because the legislation will give them greater opportunities of employment. Setting a rigid limit such as the clause proposes will not help those in work in the long run, and will harm the chances of those whom we are seeking to help, those who do not have jobs.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I commend the speech made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin). I do not know whether his amendment is in order, but he was arguing a case which deserves some specific and detailed reaction. Whatever the broad merits of this part of the Bill, we would not wish the chronically disabled and mentally retarded to be placed in an abominable position, with not even their intelligence to protect them. The hon. Gentleman advanced a strong argument, and I hope that the Minister will respond to it.

The Government have got the legislation wrong. I do not agree with many of the speeches that have been made by Labour Members, but the abolition of all wage controls for those aged under 21 is unjustified. I represent an area of endemic unemployment, with the lowest wage structure in Britain. I know what happens to wages in industries not covered by wages councils when wage protection is removed. It is not uncommon in areas such as mine for qualified 19 or 20-year-olds, some with four or five O-levels, to be earning £50 to £55 a week. That is what happens when wage protection is removed. Other parts of the country are more fortunate, but that is the logical outcome of the Government's proposals.

5.45 pm

However, there is a minute amount of truth in the Government's broad thrust, which says in essence that to pay the adult rate to an 18-year-old in industries covered by wages councils must militate against the employment of other young people. That is true. It might not be popular with young people, and it might not gain any votes to tell them, but I have no doubt that to pay the full adult rate to an 18-year-old, especially in a low-wage area such as mine, militates against their employment prospects. That occurs especially where an employer has an alternative choice of people aged 25 to 30 with skills, some experience and the other qualities acquired with age. They will compete against youngsters.

Many Conservative Members have not faced the problem. I criticise them because they have extrapolated to infinity from the specific, although I recognise it to be a genuine problem. The evidence suggests only a couple of steps, as opposed to the journey from here to the unknown.

The Government should have redefined the adult rate —I call it the experienced rate—to the age of 21. In an odd way, they have done that. They should have maintained some protection for people within those areas, having renegotiated the steps up to the age of 21. In the reply to the debate — it must have been considered because I have argued it in the House several times— the Minister must say why the Government rejected that solution. I have heard no substantial argument to convince me that that would not have been the rational and sensible outcome of the legislation.

Mr. Holt: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that part of the problem lay in previous Governments reducing from 21 to 18 the age at which full national insurance and other contributions were made? A person is an adult either at 18 or at 21. We are now introducing hybridity, which will cause further confusion.

Mr. Penhaligon: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. I am trying to reflect on the conventions in some of our European partners. In some countries it is not unknown for the adult or experienced rate not to be paid until the age of 23 or 24. In Japan, in some industries, the top or skilled rate is not paid until people are approaching their 30s. I do not accept the argument that as soon as someone if given the franchise, which is rightly given at 18, that automatically coincides with the day on which he has all the skills, experience and other qualities accumulated while earning a living. I should be pleased if the Minister would reflect on that.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), who opened the debate on the new clause, made a statement which may be right, but which was different from what I originally understood. I am not enthusiastic about the fact that the Government have withdrawn from the International Labour Organisation. I checked with the Library some months ago and was told that, although the Bill removes some minimum wage protection for those under the age of 21, it would still be possible to pass the Bill and to remain inside the ILO convention. That was asserted to me by the Library, and I should like a reply from the Minister. Will it be possible to stay in the ILO with the minimum wage protection which the Bill still gives to some, albeit only those over the age of 21?

I raise this issue because I was worried by the advice that I was given. If the Government could have stayed in, why did they withdraw? I fear that they withdrew, not because of the Bill, but because it will give them the power at some time in the future to introduce in Parliament an order to abolish all wages council restrictions from A to Z which would be debated for about one and a half hours.

Mr. Prescott: That is in the Bill.

Mr. Penhaligon: If that is so, I live and learn.

I am aware that under the Bill as drafted it will be possible for the Government to put before Parliament a proposal to abolish overnight all wages control and wages councils. I am asking whether the Government have withdrawn from the ILO because the possibility of doing that appeals to them, or because the changes provided for in the Bill forced them to withdraw from the ILO. I fear that it is the former, which makes the Government's proposals even less acceptable.

My questions therefore are, first, why can the Government not step up the age to 21, and, secondly, did they have to withdraw from the ILO because of the Bill?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): This has been an interesting and pretty long debate and I have somewhat limited time in which to reply. I wish first to reply to the point raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin), who was supported to some extent by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon).

Ms. Clare Short: I raised the matter also.

Mr. Trippier: Indeed, yes. I appreciate that credit must be shared by Opposition Members, although in fairness I am dealing with what has been said by the hon. Member whose name is appended to the amendment.

It has been quite a problem for all members of the Committee to wrestle with this. The hon. Member for Springburn is aware that there is power under present legislation to award certain permits to disabled people who would not normally be employed by employers on an individual basis, taking each case on its merits in the instance of those people disabled by any form of handicap, mental or physical.

We have gone through a period of consultation in the Department with lobbies representing handicapped people. Since the hon. Gentleman raised the point at the last sitting of the Committee, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), I have had long discussions with the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), whose name also is appended to the amendment, and with Brian Rix, the director-general of Mencap. On balance—rather like the TUC, only on balance—they do not think that there should be incorporated on the face of the Bill the legislation that is currently in force by way of a new clause. I say that because I wish to assure the hon. Member for Springburn that I have taken this point seriously both in Committee and today. I am anxious to continue to meet the lobby representing handicapped people to see how we can assist.

In the discussions with Brian Rix, I was interested to know that his members are pleased with the scheme run by the Manpower Services Commission that is known as the sheltered placement scheme. They are anxious to see the Department of Employment develop and strengthen that scheme, which they think has been a success.

I was interested in the comments of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) in opening the

debate. As I understand it, she says that this legislation is designed to cut the wages of the country's poorest workers. It is to that that we so strongly object—the fact that the Opposition are wittingly trying to mislead the public, because they talk constantly as if we are scrapping wages councils. Nothing could be further from the truth. We took notice of the consultation exercise, for which we were responsible. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) said, we passionately believe that by discriminating in favour of the under-21s we will allow them to take that important first step on the employment ladder. The hon. Member for Ladywood and her hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) peddle the propaganda, and always have done, that we are scrapping the lot. We are not.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment referred to the new realism that is creeping in. There is no way in which this Government would do anything to harm the young people whom we are anxious to see in employment. That realism is creeping into the TUC. It has not yet hit the Labour party. The document to which I referred in Committee —I sent a copy to the hon. Member for Ladywood— and which was written by senior trade unionists and members of the TUC, said:

"There can be no doubt that a general rise in the level of money incomes which significantly outstripped the rate of growth would be incompatible with achieving our objective of a high wage, high productivity, low unit cost economy, and that means that we can't have it unless we earn it."

That is the point that we have consistently made.

I say again that it is nonsense and ridiculous for the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) to suggest that Conservative Members have a pathological hatred of youth. That was a stupid statement. I suggest that it shows yet again that the Labour party is out of touch with reality.

Mr. Prescott: After listening to the debate, I am not sure whether this is a case of a pathological hatred of youth or the economic illiteracy of those Conservative Members who spoke.

The statement from which the Minister has just quoted and to which the Paymaster General gave a great deal of attention is about productivity, earnings and wages. It is the level of investment in those areas that is crucial. If he looks at the OECD's figures, he will find that Britain is better only than Portugal in its level of investment manufacturing out of the 24 countries, and this is below the level of 1979. The Minister needs to consider what brings about jobs and determines wages, but he has not done so in this case.

The Paymaster General talks about the salaries of young people. Apparently £45 is far too much. I wonder what he did about the barristers' recent claim for an increase in income. I wonder what advice the Paymaster General has given to the new top salaries review that the Government are holding back at present regarding the income recommendations—this, presumably, to be presented to the House after the Bill has been dealt with. From an examination of the Cabinet minutes on these matters, it will be observed that the right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) rejected this course of action. He would have been ashamed to hear the debate today.

Let us make it clear that we are denouncing our international obligations. We are the only country out of 94 countries to denounce our international obligations. The Labour party will restore those international obligations. We will bring back the fair wages clause and a form of wages councils that guarantee rates. We are against the sweat-shop industries that are becoming a common feature after seven years of this Government. From all the evidence that we have seen of the young workers' scheme with its reduction of wages, no extra jobs have been created.

As to the removal of the fair wages clause, hon. Members should talk to the Barking hospital cleaners. The number of people employed was reduced and the employees worked a lot harder, but they got less pay and fewer holidays. That is what this is about, driving down the wages of the low paid. It is also a question of job substitution; it is skivvy-scheme YTS that will take the place of the adult worker in wages council industries.

In 12 months' time, we will see the results of the policy. Then Labour's policy of a fair wages strategy that we outlined yesterday will be relevant, and will return a Labour Government. Therefore, we will vote for the clause in the belief that it will give a right and just return to young people.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 168, Noes 254.

Division No. 181] **[6 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Cunningham, Dr John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William

McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Trippier, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John

Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 3

CLOTHING INDUSTRY

'The Clothing Manufacturing, Retail Bespoke Tailoring, Cap and Millinery and the Made-Up Textiles Wages Councils shall be excluded from the provisions of Part II of the Bill except that the provisions of Clause 22 shall apply.'. — *[Mr. Merlyn Rees.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I spoke on Second Reading but not in Committee about my interest in clothing and textiles——

Mr. Holt: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You appear to have called new clause 3, without mentioning the other amendments to be taken with it. Are we simply discussing new clause 3?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. With new clause 3 it will be convenient also to discuss the following: New clause 7—Hotel and catering industry—

'The hotel and catering trades shall be exempted from Part II of the Act and wages councils in these sectors shall retain existing powers.'.

New clause 8—Retailing and distribution—

'The retailing and distribution trades shall be exempted from the provisions of Part II of the Act and wages councils in these sectors shall retain existing powers.'.

Amendment No. 55, in clause 12, page 12, line 4, at beginning insert—

'With the exception of the powers conferred on the clothing manufacturing, retail bespoke tailoring, cap and millinery and the made-up textiles wages councils.'.

Amendment No. 56, in clause 12, page 12, line 4, at beginning insert—

'With the exception of the powers conferred on wages councils setting conditions in the hotel and catering trades.'.

Amendment No. 57, in clause 12, page 12, line 4, at beginning insert—

'With the exception of power conferred on wages councils setting conditions for the retailing and distribution trades.'.

Mr. Rees: My interest in clothing and textiles is not new. For nearly 25 years I have represented an area of South Leeds where clothing was a major industry. The Burtons empire used to have a manufacturing base in Leeds, but that has now gone. Leeds also had the Fifty Shilling Tailors. I am sure that some hon. Members bought their first suits from such firms.

Clothing was a major industry in my area, and my prime motive in moving the new clause, is to alert the Government to the problems faced by Leeds and other textile towns nearby in the north, in the east midlands and in Leicester.

Some months ago I was prompted, in view of the problems facing the clothing and textile industry in relation to the wages councils, to table an early-day motion. It was signed by 186 people. That is not an insignificant number. I stress its main points to the Minister. I believe that it expresses the wider issues which have a bearing on the precise problems about wages councils in the Bill. The motion states:

"That this House, noting the widespread concern within the clothing industry at the Government's Wages Council proposals which would severely affect vulnerable workers, including many employees of small companies, ethnic minority workers, homeworkers and young workers generally"—

the motion led me to make a point which the Paymaster General took up on Second Reading when I made a brief intervention—

"further noting the recent report on the industry by the Department of Applied Economics at Cambridge University, which suggested that rather than destroying jobs, wage increases between 1950 and 1980 actually expanded clothing employment, and noting the contribution of the Clothing Manufacturing Wages Council (Great Britain),"—

I notice that we are not dealing with Northern Ireland now—

"the Clothing Manufacturing Wages Councils (Northern Ireland) and the other clothing wages councils to good industrial relations in the industry which is helping to provide conditions under which the advanced sector of the industry can invest so that the United Kingdom clothing industry remains internationally competitive, accordingly calls on the Government to abandon its present proposals to reduce the scope and powers of the clothing wages councils."

That early-day motion did not get anywhere. As well as representing Leeds, South—which is a clothing industry area—I also now represent Morley, which is a textile town. At least, it was a textile town, but it is no longer. Textiles have almost disappeared from it during the past 25 or 30 years and that is not simply the Government's fault. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison), who is present today, also represents a town in west Yorkshire which contains a clothing and textile industry.

New clause 3 deals with

"Retail Bespoke Tailoring, Cap and Millinery and the Made-Up Textiles Wages Councils."

6.15 pm

All these councils are in the same general boat although there are differences of approach between them, a point that I have discovered after examining them and after receiving advice from various sources. I shall concentrate now on clothing and textiles.

I shall first clarify clause 22. New clause 3 provides that clause 22 will remain in the Bill. I would like the Minister to clarify certain points about clause 22 even though that clause was dealt with in Committee. In fact, I believe that clause 22 was not dealt with adequately in Committee. There was no discussion on that clause in Committee and it was agreed to without a Division because it makes a director, manager, secretary or similar officer of a limited company, or a person purporting to act in such a capacity, liable for offences under part II of the Bill if that person consented to the offence or connived in it, or if the offence was due to that person's neglect. The similar provision in the Wages Councils Act 1979—and we are dealing with the 1979 Act now, not the Truck Act 1831—is limited to liability or a failure to return accurately completed questionnaires issued by the wages inspectorate.

Clause 22, as I read it, would give the inspectorate added powers to pursue fly-by-night employers. The clothing industry and its associated industries are not short of fly-by-night employers. I could give examples of the failure of the inspectorate to recover money that they assess is due to clothing workers.

[Mr. Rees]

A report by the factory inspectorate, which the Minister will have access to, on 300 clothing factories published in February 1985 observed:

"There is a higher turnover of employers in the clothing industry than in any other."

I could develop that point. However, we need to have clause 22 in the Bill. It gives extended powers to the inspectorate. However, I wonder whether the powers will be extended. My hon. Friends argued in Committee that the inspectorate now will have extended powers. The Minister did not reply to that argument. Do I understand that, because no reply was made, clause 22 does give extended powers to the inspectorate? I hope that the Minister will clarify that when he replies. From the Committee record, I believe that there are extended powers because the Minister would have contradicted that if it was not true.

Mr. Trippier: If I understand the right hon. Gentleman correctly, he is referring to section 24(6) and (7) of the 1979 legislation. If that is correct, the wording is virtually identical. If not, if he will clarify the matter I shall carry out the necessary research and try to reply to his point in some detail later.

Mr. Rees: It is section 24(6) and (7) of the Wages Councils Act 1979. When the Bill was in Committee, the clause was approved without debate, but when Labour Members referred generally to the extended powers they were not told that they had it wrong and that there are not extended powers. Is that what the Minister is saying?

Mr. Trippier: Yes, but I shall check that.

Mr. Rees: I thank the Minister very much. That is the first point and it shows the worth of a Report stage.

When I spoke during the Second Reading debate there was some badinage, as happens on legislation of this kind, about a report commissioned by the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. That was once a powerful union in Leeds, but it is not so powerful any more because there are not nearly as many people in the clothing industry in Leeds. However, it is an efficient union.

On Second Reading I referred to the fact that the research carried out by the department of applied economics at Cambridge showed that when pay goes up as a result of the activities of the wages council, job opportunities are expanded. That may seem extremely strange, particularly in the light of what the Paymaster General said just now. He seems to believe in an over-simplistic scenario on the effect of pay increases. He seems to think that if pay goes up, fewer people will be employed. There may be cases where that happens. That must be the case under certain conditions, but that cannot be the complete story.

The department of Employment's research paper, instituted by the Minister and replied to by the Department of applied economics, concluded that the clothing industry had fallen because of the increase in minimum rates. That was refuted not only by the unions but by the employers.

The independent examination by the department of applied economics in October 1985 countered that argument. The Paymaster General called the report in aid so I feel disposed to develop this argument because it underlines what is implicit in the Bill. The report said that the wrong figures were used in the study. Clothing and footwear figures were used instead of those for clothing. For females the Department's figures for minimum rates were incorrect. For males April minimum rates and October earnings were used instead of figures for rates and earnings in the same month. Foreign competition—we know about that in Leeds—was measured by the ratio of clothing retail prices to clothing wholesale prices. The clothing wholesale prices index was also used to calculate real minimum rates.

The Department assumed that there were always more workers willing to work in the industry for the wages available than employers wanted. That is implicit in what the Paymaster General said today. I do not find that so in my constituency. The Department assumed that employers did not substitute cheaper female labour for male employment. The Department's analysis was inadequate.

To summarise, the view of the department of applied economics was that available statistics show that the industry was short of labour for most of the period, and that the only way to get more labour into the industry was to have higher wages. Secondly, it found that the obvious explanation for the loss of jobs is foreign competition in the form of cheap imports. That is certainly the case in Leeds. I can give the Minister chapter and verse. A firm such as Maenson, formerly May and Sons of the 1860s and 1870s, eventually bought by the GUS empire, was shut down in Leeds when the pound went the wrong way and led to increased foreign competition. Given that background we want the wages councils to be excluded from the provisions of part II in the way that I describe in the new clause.

A problem in the industry arises from the high proportion of young people. Therefore, I want to deal with them. Let us not run away with the idea that young people in the clothing industry are waiting to go to the polytechnic or to Oxford university, or wherever, to read modern greats. The labour market is not a wide market that is equal; it is a series of different markets for different sorts of people.

The majority of young people entering the clothing industry undergo a fairly short period of training. As I understood the Paymaster General earlier, he was talking as though there was five years of intensive training with certificates at the end. From my experience over the past 25 years and the advice that I have been given, training is short. Then people go straight on to incentive schemes. Many of the young people are just as productive and, by the very nature of nimble fingers, more so than workers with long experience in the industry. As incentive workers, they are paid according to output, not age. If they are less productive, they automatically earn less. The Government's proposals would deem young workers not fully productive for five years. Anyone with a knowledge of the clothing industry will know that that is not the case. There is no evidence to support the Government's assertion that the extremely low rates which apply to young workers have restricted the recruitment of young trainees.

Let me deal now with the wider issue of incentive workers and holiday entitlement. The two most serious immediate consequences of part II—this is how I am advised it will affect my area, and, no doubt, other areas where people are involved in the clothing industry—will be the loss of the statutory right to holidays and the loss of the statutory right of incentive workers to be paid the minimum as a fallback rate. The holidays are of particular

importance to women workers who often do two jobs, one at home and one at work. Contractual rights to holidays are of great importance in the socio-economic scene.

If one goes by television, the modern novel and the way people write today, one would think that all that Mr. Winston Churchill did in 1908 for sweated workers and people working at home was a thing of the past, but it is not. It is important that the Government realise that the world does not end at the Watford gap. There is still an industrial north. It is not the industrial north that it was, but the Government will keep bringing forward legislation that assumes that everywhere is like Guildford and Dorking, but it is not. There is a different part of the country.

The Government do not understand that some of the old methods and ways of industry still exist. Those of us who represent seats in the north, who live in London during the week and go home at the weekend, realise more than most the two worlds in which we live. The Government, led by the Prime Minister, tend to look at the world as if there had been profound changes and the economic ethos of the north has disappeared. Incentive workers could legally earn less than the minimum rate, which is less than £7 a week. That is why the new clause is justified.

6.30 pm

I have not dealt with other wages councils, but it goes without saying that these problems apply to them too. No doubt my hon. Friends will mention them. I assume that we are wasting our time moving new clauses if the aim is to win. But perhaps our words will have some effect on the Minister and his Department. He should look at unfair competition and at the decline in the clothing industry, not only in the past 35 to 40 years, but in the past 10 years. The figures of employment are falling all the time. The industry has great problems. We shall not see again the totals that the clothing industry once had. In some ways, I am glad, because the industry was not perfect. It did not supply the right working conditions. Changes are taking place, but training and higher wages are still needed. The Government have made the mistake of changing the wages council for the clothing industry and others.

Long before I went to live in Leeds, and when I was serving in the RAF during the war, the phrase "gone for a Burton" was used. It meant that someone had had it. I often wondered where it came from. Some people say it, meaning that they have gone for a Burton ale. But I looked up that phrase again today and it is suggested that when aircrew or others trained in Blackpool and were learning morse code, they had to go to a nearby former Burtons shop to do their test. If they failed, they were flunked, and so they had "gone for a Burton".

In Leeds, Burtons has gone for a Burton. It does not produce a thing. Unless the Government help the clothing industry, it will all go for a Burton. The Bill shows a singular lack of understanding of the clothing industry's problems, and I commend the new clause to the House.

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): I listened with great interest to the speech of the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), as he clearly has great experience and important constituency interests. My constituency of Kettering is in Northamptonshire, in the midlands. There are perhaps 250 or 300 textile employees concentrated in three large firms. I appreciate that the conditions there are probably very different from those in some of the towns and cities that Labour Members may describe.

I have not received any representations about the Bill from the major employers in my constituency, who are in footwear manufacture and the making of leather handbags. However, I have received representations from the clothing industry. I have tried to understand the reason for that difference. Incidentally, I pay tribute to Mrs. Davies, the vice-chairman of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, who has patiently lobbied me for the past six or 12 months. Indeed, she was one of those who yesterday presented a petition in Downing street. For many months, I listened with care and attention to the arguments that she made, not about conditions in my constituency but in the wider national context.

The central fear of some of the industry's employees is that wages for those under the age of 21 will be cut, with the resources being transferred to the owners of companies, and distributed in profits and dividends. They fear that young people will be exploited. Judging by the conversations that I have had in my constituency, I do not believe that to be so, although my constituency may not be typical.

I believe that fear to be misplaced for two reasons. First, profitability in the industry is generally low. We well understand the arguments used in favour of toughening the multi-fibre arrangement and helping to introduce sensible measures of protection for the industry. The Minister has a constituency with substantial footwear interests. Before he became a Minister, he was one of the officers of the all-party Back-Bench footwear committee. He understands the unfair conditions facing the footwear industry, which also face the clothing and textile industries. Employers will not deliberately cut the wages of those working in the industry in order to increase distributed profits, because the profits are simply not there.

Secondly, I have taken the trouble to talk to employers about the effect of reducing national insurance contributions. The evidence is that, with lower employment costs, particularly for those aged under 21, employers are prepared to take on extra labour. Perhaps not many are involved, but that evidence still exists. I assume that the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) spoke for the alliance. I entirely agreed with what he said. He generally supported the argument that, with greater flexibility of wage rates for those aged under 21, on balance, employment prospects would be enhanced. Given last year's Budget, that must be borne out by the evidence.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South about the inspectorate. He got things exactly right, and I hope that the Minister will reply to that point. It is important that the inspectorate should have not only sufficient numbers, but the organisation and determination to make sure that the law is properly enforced.

However, I generally welcome the Bill. I do not agree with the fears expressed by those who support the new clause, and I am prepared to support the Bill as it is.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): You have grouped together, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a new clause that deals with what might broadly be called the needle trades, a new clause that deals with the hotel and catering trades, and a new clause that deals with the retail and distribution

[Mr. Ian Mikardo]

trades. It is entirely logical to group them together, as they have much in common. For example, the workers in all three industries are the most vulnerable workers, and those who will suffer most from the Bill's provisions.

Those workers will suffer most partly because they are relatively defenceless. In all three industries there are some large establishments and employers and I shall come to that point later. But all three industries also have many workplaces that employ very few people. Sometimes they employ virtually no one, as the work is done by homeworkers. As few people are employed, they are very difficult to unionise. Moreover, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) pointed out, those working in the industry are often on the move. In all three trades, the turnover of labour is much faster than in, say, the engineering industry. Thus, the workers are not unionised. They are vulnerable and low paid, and work in small establishments that are rarely visited by an inspector, so the employer can get away with almost anything. I shall not weary the House with instances, but many of those quoted in Committee involved serious abuse of workers.

I smiled to myself when I heard the speech of the Paymaster General, which was based on the assumption that there is a free bargain between employers and workers in a country with 4 million unemployed. Of course there is not a free bargain. The Government say that there can be recourse to an industrial tribunal, but that does not mean much, because in the sweatshops in east London an employer can break the law because he knows that a worker will not go to a tribunal in case he is sacked.

Anyway, not all workers have that recourse. The so-called safeguards about which Ministers keep talking do not exist; hence the vulnerability of those three industries.

I want to say a word about each of the three industries to ensure that they are properly covered. My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South spoke about great factories like Burtons. There were a few of those in east London—Simpsons, Polikoffs, and so on. However, the overwhelming majority of the needle trade in London is in small sweatshops run in exactly the same way and often in exactly the same premises as at the turn of the century. My father worked in them before this century began. There are the same sweatshop conditions now as at the beginning of the century; history is repeating itself. There is no protection for the workers.

My right hon. Friend asked why we did not have a great discussion in Committee about clause 22 to determine whether it provided extended powers for the inspectorate. It does not matter tuppence whether the clause does or does not give extended powers to the inspectorate because the inspectorate is vanishing and is almost out of existence. It is hideously understaffed, hideously overworked and hideously inadequate. Some establishments in my constituency have been in operation for 12 years but have not had an inspector across the front door. That is how frequently the inspector visits. Yet, simultaneous with the passage of the Bill, the Government are cutting the number of inspectors. In future, inspection will be much less frequent and much more perfunctory—and it is pretty perfunctory now in many cases.

Inspectors investigate whether proper wage rates are being paid by looking at the wages book. They assume that workers receive the amounts written in the wages book. I can tell the House, from first-hand experience, that that assumption is not universally valid. I suppose that it is valid in the majority of cases, but not in all. In the sort of cases that I have been describing, the only way to find out what Joe or Suzy Bloggs is being paid is to ask them. Sometimes the answer is very different from what is written in the wages book.

My next concern is about the welfare and catering trades. I accept that there are still one-man or two-man cafés, but during the past 10 or 20 years there has been a huge concentration with the establishment of hotel chains —one has swallowed up another and then a third and a fourth. There has also been the growth of huge fast food chains — the Wimpys, McDonalds, Kentuckys, Pizza Huts and so on. Those chains are hugely profitable; the employers are making enormous profits. Because of the enormous profits, shares in some of the public companies have appreciated hugely during the past few years, and virtually all of them on sweated rates of pay. The huge profits and huge capital gains made by shareholders have been achieved by workers being paid the absolute minimum.

The Government do not mind that happening because many of those companies donate some of their profits to Conservative party funds——

Mr. Trippier: No.

6.45 pm

Mr. Mikardo: Oh yes. If the Minister doubts that, I am prepared to send him a list of companies. If he challenges me, I will get my list and quote it at length later. That might prevent the Minister from making any more speeches, because it is a very long list.

In the retail distribution industry there has been considerable concentration with the growth of supermarkets and other specialised chains such as the carpet and DIY chains. There is constant pressure not only to hold down wages, but to lower them. In an earlier debate the Paymaster General spoke about a drive to increase wages. He could not have been talking about this Bill because its purpose is to decrease wages.

In all the three groups I have mentioned there are vulnerable workers who will be abused even more than they are now. Although the three groups appear to be different each from the other, there is a common case for all of them, which is why it was sensible to group them. It is an overwhelming case for the exclusion of each of the three industries from the Bill. I shall therefore support the new clause in the Lobby.

Mr. Holt: Part II of the Bill is the part on which I should support the Government much more fully than I did on part I, but I hesitate to do so because I think that, as with part I, they do not have it quite right. The Government have not abolished all wages councils, and they should either have done so or left them alone. To tinker with them is the worst of all worlds.

If the Government had read the evidence given to the Institute of Personnel Management when it surveyed all sectors of industry and commerce on that issue, they swould have seen very few friends for wages councils. They are not liked by either side — employer or employee. Indeed, the evidence shows that seven or eight years ago the TUC was in favour of their abolition, and we can understand why. The industries with the lowest

paid workers are those that come within the wages councils; by definition, wages councils tend to depress wage rates. There are no wages councils for many of our major industries, and if there were none at all the natural process of market forces would operate. However, we have now an unnatural aspect of market forces introduced by wages councils on a set of criteria that are in themselves often meaningless.

The members of wages councils make decisions without having the responsibility of carrying them out. They do not have to find the money to pay the wages that they set, and they can deliberately opt for a low wage settlement to avoid the hassle that accompanies protracted negotiations. Neither side of industry is done any favours by having wages councils.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) observed that there is not strong trade unionism in the wages councils sector. That was part of the TUC argument. If the wages council umbrella were removed, the opportunity and the impetus of the unorganised to become members of trade unions and to be organised would be greater. One of the major reasons why workers in the wages council sector do not join trade unions is that they take the view that they are covered by the councils and that the wages set by these arbitrary bodies is, by and large, what they will receive. By definition, the councils keep workers at the lower end of the pay scale and do not provide a free opportunity for both sides of industry properly to negotiate for a set of wages, terms and conditions similar to that which exists in other industries.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The hon. Gentleman is wrong in two respects. First, previous TUC opposition to wages councils was formulated at a time when we did not have 4·5 million unemployed. Secondly, workers in the areas and industries covered by wages councils have employers who would sack them if they joined a trade union. That is why there have been so many disputes. The employers say, "If you join a trade union, you will go out of the door. There are plenty more people to take your job if you want to go."

Mr. Holt: I understand the hon. Gentleman's first argument as it is one that appears in the report produced by those who subscribe to the Institute of Personnel Management. It is said in that report that the attitudes of the various sides of industry depend very much on the moment when wages councils are discussed.

Are wages councils now what was intended by the late Sir Winston Churchill in 1908? Are conditions now exactly what they were then? I submit that conditions are very different in one strategic sense. In 1908, there was no television and no mass media of the sort that we have now. There were not the communications that are available to us. The underlying theme of 1908 no longer applies. I cannot understand why the Labour party is arguing so vociferously in favour of wages councils when they have not improved the conditions of the workers whom they cover and have covered over the years when comparisons are made with other industries. That is why I think that the Government are making a mistake even to have the minimum clause that is now to be found in the Bill.

We know that the majority of those who are members of wages councils—we went through this in fine detail in Committee — have never worked in industry or commerce. Three quarters of them have come from academic or legal backgrounds, yet they have been appointed to make wages council decisions and orders. The members of the councils have not come up through the trade union movement.

Mr. Tom Torney (Bradford, South): I have a list of members of the retail food trades wages council, and it is clear that the hon. Gentleman does not understand how wages councils are formulated. Their membership is not restricted to university professors or academics. Trade union officials and trade union members sit on wages councils, as do representatives of employers. They try to thrash out a settlement. I appreciate that there are appointed members, and the side that can draw the support of the appointed members wins the day. The order of the retail food trades wages council is a much better one than that which existed before I came to the House 16 years ago, and that has been achieved by trade union representation.

Mr. Holt: I accept that the hon. Gentleman has strong feelings on this issue. However, one of the arguments set out in the consultative document is that the councils have the very tendency which he demonstrated, which is that of the pendulum effect. They swing one way one year and the other way the next. It might be correct and proper if they were to swing one way for several years. As there is a balance on the councils, the members of them are always looking over their shoulders to ensure that they are not criticised by anyone. At the same time, they are not devoting their attention to the industries for which they are responsible. Instead, they are considering the actions and orders of other councils. In effect, they are equating within a narrow band. If there were no wages councils and if rates of pay were not set artificially for the industries that they now cover, without consideration being given to whether companies can pay more or less, the workers could be better off.

The Government's argument is that the changes that are set out in the Bill will increase the number of employees. They argued a couple of years ago that by changing the qualifying period for a case to be taken to an industrial tribunal they would similarly increase the number in employment. I have not seen the evidence of that yet in my constituency. The Government were warned, but they did not listen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is being very general in his comments. He should relate his remarks more to the amendments and the new clause.

Mr. Holt: I had referred to wages councils throughout, Mr. Deputy Speaker, until the last passage before you intervened.

Unlike the hon. Member for Bow and Popular, I am sorry that the amendments have been grouped together. If they had remained separate, we could have had three separate debates and could have argued the merits and demerits of the individual industries. One of the bad features of national legislation is that it always brings everything down to a common level. The amendments will do nothing for the workers in the industries to which they relate other than to maintain the status quo in a weakened form.

I am sorry that the Government have not abolished the wages councils. If their abolition proved to be

[Mr. Holt]

unsuccessful, they could be brought back at a later date. Until they are abolished and we go through a period when they do not exist, we shall not know whether we would be better without them. We are to have the worst of both worlds, as we shall have a weakening of the existing system and a half-baked, one-line minimum which in reality will not mean a great deal to those who are covered by the wages councils in the industries to which the amendments relate.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) is living in another world. He does not seem to realise that in the clothing, catering, hotel and retail industries, to which wages council orders apply, workers are disadvantaged and unprotected. They are not members of unions because, on the whole, they are part-timers and/or women employees who do not join unions as readily as men. They are frightened that if they join a union they will lose their jobs, even if they are not especially good ones.

I am dealing with a firm in my constituency—I do not want to name it because negotiations are taking place—from which a group of workers came to my surgery seeking my advice. The members of the group told me that the company does not like unions and added, "If we join a union, we are afraid that we shall lose our jobs. We have mortgages and families. Our jobs are not brilliant, but at least they are jobs." They showed me how they were protected by their contracts of employment. They were notified of a change of contract. The reason given for the change was "management decision". In other words, the days of Attila the Hun have not gone from the factories of Leicester.

7 pm

In its own way, the clothing industry in Leicester has performed a miracle in staying alive. I salute the resilience of the work force and some of the managements which, through their efforts, have kept the industry alive. However, all that is left is the remains of a great industry. I remember my father saying in the House that Leicester would never be hit by a recession and that it got through the last one because people cannot do without shoes, clothing, hosiery and knitwear. Father was right about many things, including most of his criticisms of his son, but he was wrong about that. The effects of the recession and of unlimited imports have kept people in the clothing industry at the lowest wage level and have put many of them out of work.

The Government did not abolish the wages councils, as the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) would have wished, out of any sense of kindness or compassion, but because many of their supporters in the industries recognised that abolishing wages councils and their orders would invite the cowboys in the industries to undercut them by paying even less then they had to pay under the minimum rates of the wages councils orders. That is why the Government did not get rid of the wages councils. That is why the Government are only prepared to get rid of them in stages. That is why we have had the emasculation of the system rather than its total abolition.

Leicester used to be the second most prosperous city in Europe. Today, unemployment in Leicester is rife. Unemployment in the hosiery industry in my constituency is as high as 60 per cent. The Government have the odd idea that, if they cut wages further and allow employers in the textile hosiery and retail industries to pay sweatshop wages without conditions, there will be more jobs. They think that employers will be prepared to take on more people if those whom they employ are sweated labour. Labour Members are against sweated labour. We believe that the wages councils regulations provide about the only protection there is against it, especially in periods of high unemployment.

The *Leicester Mercury*, Leicester's local newspaper, performed a public service by revealing the sweatshop conditions that exist. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) said with his usual eloquence, the conditions are made much worse by cutting the strength of the factory safety inspectorate.

The number of sweatshops is growing and the cowboys are moving in. Homeworkers are exploited. The Government, in their pursuit of more jobs, are removing the rights of people who have jobs. That is no way to create employment. As the hon. Member for Langbaurgh said, in connection with another matter when he was stopped by the Chair, that will not work. There has been no improvement in employment because the Government's policy has taken away the rights of those at work. There will be no improvement in employment because the Government are seeking the destruction of the wages councils, if not by a direct route, then by an indirect one.

I support the clause proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) because it would remove from the legislation the clothing and textiles industry, which is in deep recession, and would give some hope to the people who work in it that hon. Members understand, as the hon. Member for Langbaurgh does not, the problems under which they so ceaselessly labour.

Mr. Tony Banks: New clause 7 states:

"The hotel and catering trades shall be exempted from Part II of the Act and wages councils in these sectors shall retain existing powers."

I am a sponsored member of the Transport and General Workers' Union. Some members of the union will be covered by new clause 7. The hotel and catering sector is the second largest sector covered by wages council protection. Three separate wages councils cover workers in pubs, clubs, licensed hotels, restaurants, cafes and snack bars.

It seems appropriate that the House, the home of the free lunch, should take considerable interest in the conditions that workers experience in the hotel and catering sector. I hope that when hon. Members next enjoy the benefits of a lunch or dinner in one of London's restaurants or hotels, they will think for a moment about the wages and conditions which the workers who have prepared the food, those who have served it, and those who wash up afterwards, must endure. In common with other wages council industries, poor conditions, low pay and poor prospects combine to produce high labour turnover, even in times of high unemployment, in the hotel and catering industry.

Union membership in the industry stands at just 6 per cent. of the national work force. Collective bargaining is confined to workers in a few large hotels and chains. The majority of workers rely directly on the wages councils to protect their wages and conditions. That is the answer to the comments of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). Workers in that sector do not join trade unions

because, if they do, they will be straight out of the door. The industries rely on high turnoyer and the threat of unemployment, which scare people from joining trade unions.

Although we could, no doubt, find some common ground in saying that there are defects in wages councils, Labour Members accept wages councils now because at least they provide minimal protection for the workers who most desperately need protection. I am looking to the next Labour Government to take a completely different attitude to the protection of workers in the hotel and catering sector. Labour Members have clearly demonstrated that the industry has changed dramatically because of the fast food chains and the importation of American systems.

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman has not participated in the debate up until now. Perhaps he missed the important statement from the Labour Front Bench about what will happen if the Labour Party wins the next general election. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said that a Labour Government would bring in a national minimum wage. Therefore, the wages councils would be null and void.

Mr. Banks: That does not necessarily follow. I was merely pointing out that, for the moment, we support a wages council system, because at least it provides some minimal level of protection. My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) said that the Government have not introduced the legislation to force wages up; they have introduced it to force wages down. It is quite remarkable that the Government's philosophy seems to be that the poor should suffer more poverty as a way of inspiring them to greater effort, but the rich should have greater wealth to inspire them. I have not heard of many judges, admirals, generals, consultants, or even politicians, pricing themselves out of jobs, as they take their large wage increases given by central Government. However, in the catering and hotel industry, where wages and conditions are already appalling, the Government want to take away the minimal protection that workers have. That is why I urge the House to support new clause 7.

Mr. Trippier: I am anxious to deal with many of the points raised by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees). Although I shall try to cover some of the points made by other hon. Members, I am sure that the House will understand if I concentrate on the right hon. Gentleman's points, which were specific. The right hon. Gentleman and I share the experience of not having to change money at Watford. Those of us who come from and represent constituencies in the north are aware of what life is like there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) represents a textile and footwear constituency and I know that much of what the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South said was accurate. It was not conjecture or hypothesis. I agreed with many of his points. On many occasions, there has been all-party support on matters concerning the textile lobby—for example, on renewals of multi-fibre arrangements. Many hon. Members have joined forces, as I did when I was a Back Bencher, to lobby Ministers. There is no difference among us in that respect.

As I tried to point out in Committee, our differences on this issue are political and, to a great degree, psychological, in that one either accepts what the Government are saying—that those under 21 will be discriminated in favour of as a result of being taken out of the purview of the wages councils—or one does not. I am not trying to put this bluntly; I am simply saying that one either accepts that view or one does not. We touched on this aspect in the debate on the last series of amendments. No Government in their right mind would go out of their way to do any harm to people under 21. We believe that, as a result of this legislation, we shall increase employment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering put it well. He has experience in a constituency similar to mine of what is going on in industries which employ people who, by any standards, could be said to be low paid. Because we share that experience, we know what it is like.

As I said, the intention of clause 22 was to use the precise wording in the 1979 legislation in this legislation. I spent some time considering this aspect and took the advice of lawyers in the Department. I am not satisfied that my initial intervention during the speech of the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South was correct. I think that he has a point. There are wider powers in the Bill. If that is correct, I am sure that he will be pleased, and I am certainly not sorry about that. I hope that we agree.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: Would it not be a good idea for the hon. Gentleman—I do not want to develop this point now—to help us by advising us on the extent to which the powers have been extended?

Mr. Trippier: I am happy to do that. I am under an obligation to the right hon. Gentleman to make that commitment.

Of the Opposition's contributions, the point with which I disagreed most was made by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo). That is a pity, because I have great respect for him. We had many exchanges in Committee. The hon. Gentleman implied, as did some of his hon. Friends — it was unique — that the Bill's intention was to drive wages down. That is not true. Labour Members could argue that that could have happened if the Government had gone down the route of total abolition advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), but we did not.

I carefully followed the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh. Today, he developed his argument in a way that differed slightly from his approach in Committee. One would have to be foolish to disagree with him when he says that the wages council system does not appear to have worked. That is not open to conjecture or hypothesis. It is a fact. This Government or any Government would face a dilemma in considering whether they should go for complete abolition or whether they should try to remove youngsters under 21 from the purview of the legislation. Contrary to the comments of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), no subterfuge is involved in the Government's intention to keep protection just for those over 21. We were convinced, following the consultation exercise, that protection for adult workers had to remain.

7.15 pm

I am sure that hon. Members listened carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh. If we scrapped the whole of the wages council system, as he suggested,

[Mr. Trippier]

we would be taking an incredible risk. Labour Members would never be prepared to take such a risk and, on this occasion, I agree with them. It would be too big a risk.

I return to the point that I made to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South. One either believes that we are helping youngsters under 21 to obtain jobs and to take that essential first step on the employment ladder, or one does not. We can argue for hours on this subject. Indeed, I suggest that we have already done so in Committee. We are talking about not a slight division but a massive chasm between us. It does not please me to say to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South that we are talking about a massive divide, but we believe that we are right and that the evidence is that youth employment will increase as a result of the legislation.

We accept—I do not think that any hon. Member mentioned this—that there will be some displacement, and it would be silly to deny that. We have always acknowledged that there would be some displacement, but believe that, on balance, there will be an increase in employment among those under 21 in the wages council industries.

Despite the comments of the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South on clause 22 and his incorporation in the proposed new clause of the provisions of clause 22, I am afraid that, because I do not believe that we can operate two different types of wages council systems, I have to ask the House to reject the new clause.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 4

SUNDAY WORKING

'Notwithstanding whatever other determinations a wages council may make in respect of remuneration, the council shall fix a premium hourly rate of remuneration in respect of time worked by a worker on a Sunday.'.—*[Ms. Clare Short.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Torney: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member cannot move the motion, because he has not tabled the new clause. The motion can be moved formally.

Ms. Clare Short: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Torney: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise.

I must first declare an interest. I am sponsored by the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. I must say in passing that I was astounded at the apparent lack of knowledge of some Conservative Members about the way in which wages council orders work and how they tick. I should be happy to explain how they work to the appropriate Conservative group. I am sure that I can do that because I served for many years as a full-time officer of my union.

The Government must surely know to their cost that Sunday is special. Despite the Conservative party's huge majority in the House, it was defeated recently on the Shops Bill. That is proof, if ever it were needed, that Sunday is special. The Government's defeat was evidence of the fact that right hon. and hon. Members thought that Sunday was special. Tory Members contributed in no mean way to the Government's defeat. Sunday is as important a part of the Wages Bill as it is of the Shops Bill. The Wages Bill encroaches on our Sunday just as much as the Shops Bill would have done. Conservative Members cannot have double standards. They defeated their Government then; they should defeat them again.

It has long been established that if a worker is called upon to work on a day that is not a working day, but is a holiday or, as in the case we are discussing, the Sabbath, premium payments should be made. The wages council orders have made it obligatory for such payments to be made by employers to workers called upon to work on the day I described.

Sunday for most people is a day of relaxation. Relaxation is taken in many different ways. Some people favour amateur sports activities, and others may simply wish to rest, perhaps after a hard week's work. Certainly Sunday is a family day when all can be joined in the true spirit of family life and it is also a day for friends. We should never take action which would prevent people from following their democratic right to attend a place of worship. The employer who asks a worker to give up his freedom on a Sunday should be compelled to pay dearly. It is not just a question of workers wishing to increase their earnings. We should make it as expensive as possible for an employer to call upon his employees to work on a Sunday to deter employers from using workers in that way.

Wages council orders were introduced to give protection to workers in depressed industries such as retail distribution, catering and other industries mentioned in the previous debate by many hon. Members, where, through lack of trade union organisation, the workers were unable to seek protection in any other way. In my youth I worked in a shop and I know from experience that without the meagre protection provided by the wages councils I would have been expected to work all hours and all days, including Sundays, for a mere pittance paid weekly.

The introduction of wages councils, while not giving the best conditions to workers in depressed industries, at least provided a basis for better conditions. Wages councils also gave a measure of protection to those workers who were better organised in their trade unions and enabled them to secure better conditions for trade union members.

Wages councils were hailed by the better employers because they had to sell their wares in the same market as bad employers and, therefore, were subject to unfair competition from those bad employers who would not hesitate to exploit workers and force them to work on Sundays without extra payment. Let us not delude ourselves: there are plenty of employers today, certainly in retail distribution which I know so well, who will work their employees on a Sunday without premium payment and will ask them to work unsocial hours if the Bill is passed in its present form.

The Government are not a caring Government. They care for profits, not people. That is shown by the Shops Bill which would have compelled people to work on Sundays. The Shops Bill provided no protection for the conscience of workers and, coupled with the abolition of wages councils and Sunday premiums, would have provided no protection for workers. The Shops Bill would have been aided and abetted by a Wages Bill designed to give greater opportunity for private profit while reducing the standard of life of workers in the lowest paid sections of industry, which includes all forms of retail distribution

and catering. We must add to that the mass unemployment and the Government's attacks on the trade union movement which are all designed to create a low-wage, high-profit economy. Therefore, I ask the Government to withdraw the Bill or hon. Members to defeat it when it is put to the vote.

Mr. Trippier: It may be that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Torney) was not present two hours ago when I referred to a booklet written by the Trades Union Congress. It sets out the TUC's views, which are in direct contrast to those of the hon. Gentleman. I shall send the hon. Gentleman a copy of the booklet because he will find that the TUC was not in agreement with the latter part of his speech.

Mr. Torney: Which part?

Mr. Trippier: I am somewhat short of time and I do not want to repeat what I have already said to hon. Members who have been here for all of the debate. I think that that is a fair point. I shall certainly write to the hon. Gentleman.

If new clause 4 and amendments Nos. 60, 61 and 62 to clause 14 were to be accepted, they would give wages councils additional powers which the Government cannot accept.

Under the Bill, the powers of councils are limited to fixing a minimum hourly rate for basic hours and a minimum hourly overtime rate for time worked in excess of the basic hours. If a worker works on a Sunday and that time is in excess of the basic hours laid down by the wages council, the worker will be entitled to the minimum hourly overtime rate for all time worked on that Sunday. The Government strongly believe that the role of wages councils should be restricted to providing only basic protection and that other matters, including holiday payments and differential rates, should be left to be agreed between employers and workers.

There was almost universal support among employers responding to the consultation exercise for the view that the system had to be drastically simplified if it were to remain. We really cannot continue to put businesses in a straitjacket in which they are prevented from negotiating, as freely as possible, the terms and conditions of employment they can afford.

If new clause 4 and the amendments were carried, they would undo one of the prime objectives of the Bill—that of releasing employers from unnecessary burdens and enabling them to give more time to running their businesses.

New clause 5 would enshrine in statute the existing rights of 2·7 million workers in wages council trades. The House will wish to know that many of the arguments advanced by the Opposition in support of this proposal were debated at length in Committee. I am happy to restate the Government's case.

Part II of the Bill is about deregulation and simplification. Wages councils have been able to fix a wide range of terms and conditions. That has had the effect of putting employers in the legal straitjacket I referred to earlier, which has made it all but impossible for them to negotiate with their workers in a way that is more closely tailored to the needs of the business. The majority of employer responses to the consultation exercises were clearly in favour of radical reform if the wages council system were to be retained.

The House will wish to be aware that workers currently employed under a contract incorporating any or all of the terms of existing wages orders can expect their employment to continue on that basis unless the terms of their contract are changed. A contract cannot be changed unilaterally, but either party may seek at any time to change the terms of the contract by agreement.

If an employer seeks to change the terms of a worker's contract and the worker is unwilling to accept the new terms, he can sue in a civil court for breach of contract, whether or not his employment has terminated. As a separate right, the worker can, if he wishes, seek compensation through an industrial tribunal on the ground that he has been constructively dismissed, provided he has at least two years' service. It will be for the tribunal to decide whether the change in contractual terms is sufficient in law to amount to constructive dismissal. These are substantial protections, as the House will recognise.

Part II of the Bill is a balanced measure. It will prevent the detailed prescription of a multiplicity of terms and conditions which are more properly for agreement between employer and worker. At the same time, it preserves the essential core of the system by providing basic protection. The amendments are wholly incompatible with the Government's objectives, and I ask the House to reject them.

7.30 pm

Ms. Clare Short: The lack of interest in new clause 4 shows an extreme case of double standards. There was a major revolt in the Conservative party on Sunday trading, when we were told that there was deep concern to keep Sunday special because of people's Christian commitments or humanitarian concern for the family, so the Bill was defeated and the Government were forced to withdraw it. Today, the new clause attempts to minimise the requirement for shopworkers to work on a Sunday, and no one is interested.

We all agree that some people must work on a Sunday, but most of us think that Sunday work is unfortunate and should be minimised. Anyone who is asked to work on a Sunday should be rewarded accordingly. At the moment shop workers, for example, get double time if they have to work on a Sunday. That makes the work expensive and means that employers are less likely to demand it. The power to set a premium for Sunday work is being abolished by the Government, which exposes a lack of concern for shop workers and others working on a Sunday. That shows the hypocrisy in the Tory party's stand on Sunday trading. We believe that the power to set a special rate for Sunday should be restored to wages councils so that all workers are not too readily required to work on a Sunday and are adequately rewarded if they are so required.

New clause 5 is also important. It says that those currently employed by wages council industries should not have their conditions of work reduced. The Minister talked about their contract of employment and certain conditions that they might have under their contract, but surely anyone working in a wages council industry has as an implied term of his contract the right to the protection of the conditions that are laid down in the wages council orders. That includes overtime, differential and premium

[Ms. Clare Short]

rates, holiday pay and holiday entitlement. Suddenly, by legislation, the Government are weakening the workers' contracts, and the protection that they have.

It is perhaps widely understood that young people will suffer as a consequence of part II, but it is less well understood that adult workers in wages council industries will suffer gravely. No longer will there be provision for holiday pay or holiday entitlement, or premium payments for night work, Sunday or Saturday work, and so on. No longer will there be differentials for skill. There is concern among employers that that will lead to less training and more poaching, and that they will not be able to hold skilled workers. All that is to be wiped away by the Government in their dogmatic adherence to deregulation, as they call it, but we know that it is all about reducing workers' wages.

Amendments Nos. 60, 61 and 62 attempt to give back to wages councils the power to fix premium rates for Sundays, differential rates and holiday pay. The power would not have to be used by the wages council. Why do the Government not allow wages councils to fix those rates if they think they are beneficial to their industries? The Government talk about freedom of choice and freedom for employers and workers to regulate conditions in their own industries as they see fit. We say that the Government do not mean that. If they did, they would leave to the wages councils the power to fix conditions which they thought best for their own industries. Instead, the Government are wiping away those powers and thus reducing the conditions of work for the poorest workers in the wages council industries.

Question put and negatived.

Schedule 2

Constitution etc. of Wages Councils

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move amendment No. 59, in page 32, line 4 at end insert—

'(1A) Unless it appears to the Secretary of State to be inappropriate in all the circumstances for this sub-paragraph to apply to the wages council—

(a) the employers' association nominated by him for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)*(a)*, or

(b) where two or more employers' associations are so nominated, at least one of those associations,

shall be an employers' association appearing to him to be representative of small businesses within the scope of operation of the wages council.'.

In Committee my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) tabled an amendment to schedule 2 designed to ensure that the voice of small businesses had a chance to be heard when important decisions affecting their prosperity, and even their survival in some instances, were being discussed in their wages council. My hon. Friend withdrew his amendment on the understanding that we would table another with the correct technical wording to cover the point that he made. The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) was very supportive of the amendment.

As the Secretary of State does not normally appoint employers' or workers' representatives himself — it would not be appropriate for him to do so in most cases —the way in which to secure the result intended is to ensure that at least one of the associations that he nominates to appoint employers' representatives on the council is truly representative of small firms.

The amendment is without prejudice to the fact that on many councils there are already representatives of associations which claim to represent small businesses or to represent both large and small businesses—some do both. My hon. Friend's point was extremely well made and accepted by the vast majority of, if not all, members of the Committee. I undertook to table another amendment, and that is the reason for the amendment. I hope that the House will accept it.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): On behalf of Conservative Members, I thank my hon. Friend for fulfilling the undertaking that he gave in Committee. My amendment commended itself across the Committee. I was grateful for the support that I received, especially from the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo).

My hon. Friend the Minister took away my amendment, and I notice that his amendment expresses the effect of my amendment in about 50 words, whereas I struggled to contain it within only eight. However, it would be wrong to carp at this stage of the proceedings.

This is a small but important point. The amendment means that from now on small businesses will have a watchdog on each wages council, able to speak directly to the heart of Government on the way in which wages councils and their orders operate. This applies not just to the larger companies that are covered by wages council legislation, but to the very small—the one-man or two-man family business. I am particularly pleased with this provision.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14

Wages orders

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move amendment No. 63, in page 14, leave out lines 10 to 12 insert—

'(1A) Any such order may—

(a) make different provision under subsection (1) in relation to periods of time beginning with different dates;

(b) provide for any matter fixed by the order in pursuance of that subsection to have effect only as from a date later than that on which the order comes into force;

but no such order shall provide for a limit fixed in pursuance of paragraph *(c)* of that subsection to have effect at a time when no rate or rates fixed in pursuance of paragraph *(a)* or *(b)* of that subsection will have effect under the order.'.

This is essentially a technical amendment designed to remove a possible doubt that arises in the wording of the Bill as to whether wages councils will be able to continue to provide, within the space of one wages order, for staged increases in minima or reductions in the point at which the overtime rate becomes payable. As hon. Members may know, under past legislation the councils are free to stage increases if they so wish. It is not an everyday occurrence, but there are times in negotiations when both workers' and employers' sides are glad to make use of it.

It was never our intention that the reference in the new legislation to single rates should remove that flexibility from future negotiations and make it necessary for councils to meet all over again, issue new proposals and make new orders just because they wish an uplift in one particular item to be staged rather than implemented all at

once. It seems that they may have to go through that laborious, expensive procedure if we do not make this minor adjustment to the Bill. I am sure that negotiators on both sides would be disturbed if they found, on enactment of the Bill, that we had inadvertently imposed the extra burden of additional meetings upon them.

I ask the House to accept the desirability of the amendment in the interests of retaining the present flexibility for negotiators on both sides.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move amendment No. 64, in page 14, line 36, leave out from 'In' to 'as' in line 37 and insert

'this Part any reference, in relation to a time worker, to time worked by that worker shall be construed'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 65 to 74.

Mr. Trippier: All the amendments in this group are for the purpose of clarifying the Bill and safeguarding workers' rights. Clause 14 requires any reference to time worked by a time worker in subsections (1) and (3) to be treated as including a reference to waiting time, which is time during which a worker is required by his employer to be available at his place or work and waiting for work to be given to him to perform, but where no work is available. The need for such a provision is self-evident.

Amendment No. 64 clarifies and strengthens the "waiting time" provision by making it clear beyond doubt that any reference in part II—not just in subsections (1) and (3) of clause 14—to time worked by a time worker shall be construed as including a reference to time during which he is required, whether in accordance with his contract or otherwise, to be available for work and is so available at his place of work.

This is a small but important additional safeguard which I commend to the House as being necessary to avoid any possibility that could result in workers somehow not being entitled to payment for "waiting time".

The intention behind amendments Nos. 65 to 74 can be simply explained. The amendment to subsection 1(3) is designed to make it absolutely clear that the offence of failing to pay not less than the statutory minimum requirement is normally tied to a particular week. This effect may well be achieved because, as the subsection is currently drafted, an employer is required to pay any worker to whom an order applies not less than the statutory minimum remuneration, which is defined in clauses 14 and 15. Nevertheless, it is considered desirable for this subsection, which creates a criminal offence, to be completely clear and unambiguous. The amendment achieves this objective.

If an employer is convicted of failing to pay a worker not less than the statutory minimum remuneration, clause 16(4) and (5) enable the court to award arrears of wages which have accumulated during the two-year period prior to the date of the offence. As drafted, the effect of clauses 16(4) and (5) is that all remuneration paid to the worker for the entire two-year period would have to be added together and compared with all SMR due for that period. Any shortfall in SMR would be the amount that a court could order the employer to pay to the worker. However, this method of calculation could produce the result that no arrears might be due even though, for some periods during the two years, the worker had been underpaid, or indeed paid no wages at all.

The Government consider that this result is not within the spirit of the legislation and does not adequately protect the interests of workers. That is why we have tabled these amendments. Their effect will be that the court, in deciding the appropriate sum to award by way of arrears, will focus only on weeks or, where appropriate, groups of weeks up to four, during which the worker was underpaid in the two-year period prior to the date of the offence, ignoring weeks when the worker may have received in excess of the minimum, and to make an order for repayment on that basis.

It is necessary to make provision for periods of up to four weeks to be grouped because some workers—most commonly those who work in restaurants, shops and supermarkets — are paid under their contracts by reference to periods of longer than a week—usually a cycle or rota not exceeding four weeks—during each of which they may work a varying number of hours, but for which they are paid a fixed sum each week. Taking the whole of that cycle into account, it might be the case that no underpayment occurred even though, in individual weeks during the cycle, the worker's pay may have been above or below the statutory minimum. In this situation it would be unfair for the week or weeks of underpayment falling within the cycle of employment to be taken separately in the calculation of arrears when, over the whole cycle, the worker had not been underpaid.

These amendments are balanced and sensible and will assist part II to operate as intended. I commend them to the House.

Ms. Clare Short: The Opposition support any amendment that makes it more likely that workers who have been illegally underpaid will get their arrears of pay. This is a small adjustment, but it is welcome and the Opposition do not resist it.

May I ask the Minister to repeat the undertaking that he gave in Committee about the redrafting of clause 17? I am grateful to him for having raised the matter with me and for saying that it is still under consideration and that he intends to hold to his undertaking. It is right, however, that it should be on the record. Will the Minister give an undertaking that his promise to look at the clause and redraft it in the way that was suggested in Committee still holds?

Mr. Trippier: I am glad that the hon. Lady was kind enough to refer to the fact that earlier today we were in touch on this matter. I gave a clear undertaking in Committee, and I do not have the slightest wish to move away from it. We detected in Committee what we believed to be a dichotomy between part I and part II, and I said that on Report we would come back with a clear amendment, which I think will have to be to part II. The parliamentary draftsman says that he requires more time. That is not to suggest, by any stretch of the imagination, that we are moving away from our undertaking. I give a clear undertaking now to the hon. Lady that the clause will be ready for amendment in the other place. I am sure that we shall be able to meet the point that the hon. Lady raised with me in Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 16

EFFECT AND ENFORCEMENT OF WAGES ORDERS

Amendments made: No. 65, in page 16, line 25, after 'who', insert

', in relation to any week,'.

No. 66, in line 33, leave out

'then, subject to subsection (6)'

and insert

'the court may (subject to subsection (5A)) order the employer to pay to the worker the appropriate sum in respect of the week in relation to which the offence was committed, and (subject to subsections (5A) and (6))'.

No. 67, in line 35, leave out 'such' and insert 'other'.

No. 68, in line 36, after 'employer', insert 'such'.

No. 69, in line 37, leave out 'during' and insert

'in relation to any week falling within'.

No. 70, leave out line 44 and insert

'in respect of the week in relation to which the failure occurred'.

No. 71, in page 17, line 5, leave out

'during the period of two years'

and insert

'in respect of the week'.

No. 72, in line 7, leave out 'any' and insert 'the'.

No. 73, in line 9, leave out 'during that period' and insert

'in respect of that week'.

No. 74, in line 10, at end insert—

'(5A) A court shall not make an order in the case of any time worker under subsection (4) in respect of any such offence or failure as is mentioned in that subsection if—

(a) the offence was committed or the failure occurred in relation to a week forming part of a cycle of weeks (not exceeding four) during which the time worked by that worker in a week was different in different weeks; and

(b) the total remuneration paid to that worker in respect of the total time worked by him during the cycle was not less than the aggregate of the statutory minimum remuneration provided for him by the relevant order under section 14 in respect of the time worked in the constituent weeks of the cycle.'.—*[Mr. Trippier.]*

Clause 19

OFFICERS

7.45 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I beg to move amendment No. 75, in page 19, line 29, at end insert 'and he shall appoint an adequate number of inspectors to ensure that the law is complied with in all workplaces covered by Wages Council orders'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this, it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 77, in page 21, line 19, at end, insert—

'(8) Officers acting for the purposes of this Act shall normally prosecute on the first occasion when an offence is discovered.

(9) A report shall be published annually listing the cases where prosecution was not brought and detailing the reasons for non-prosecution'.

Mr. Pendry: These are very important amendments. If the Minister thought that his amendments were balanced and sensible, these are even more so.

Yesterday, a basic myth, which has been widely held, concerning the Tory party was smashed and is now dead and buried. When the Paymaster General rejected new clause 10, which would have given workers the option either to be paid in cash or by cheque, the party that proudly boasts that it is the party of freedom of choice for the individual lost one of its basic claims. We argued that there should be freedom of choice for the worker, but the Government voted against it.

If the Government reject these amendments they will not be seen to be the party of law and order. Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends feel that the Government have already lost that claim, following their disastrous record on crime since 1979. The Government's policy on law enforcement in the industrial sphere is at stake in this debate. We debated at some length in Committee the basic principles that underlie the amendments, but the Minister was at his most unconvincing when he tried to answer the points put to him by me and some of my hon. Friends.

In a BBC Radio 4 interview on 24 April the Under-Secretary of State said that he favoured a firmer line being taken by the wages inspectorate with employers and that he intended to come down like a ton of bricks on recalcitrant employers. That could only mean more prosecutions. The Opposition intend to hold the Minister to that undertaking. However, there are many reasons why the Opposition find it difficult to believe that undertaking. One reason is that, on Second Reading, the Under-Secretary of State said that only 8 per cent. of those who are visited are found to have broken the law, and that the Government were concentrating on the worst offenders. I shall demonstrate later what his Department means when the Minister says that it is dealing with the worst offenders.

There is another good reason for our disbelief in the Minister's intentions: the well-known letter to me of 8 April in which the Minister informed me that he intended to cut the wages inspectorate by 85 personnel following the enactment of the Bill. In other words, 85 policemen—for that is what they are—will be taken away from the already inadequate number of people who are responsible for upholding the law. The charge that was levelled at the Minister then, as now, is that he has grossly overstated the simplification of the wages orders. The Bill is unlikely to reduce the inspection resources needed by the Bill. The most complex provision of current wages orders, the piecework rate, is to be retained and will be made even more important, as clause 15 prevents any other rate from being applied to pieceworkers.

Most of the work of the wages inspectorate consists of visiting employers and checking their records. Although the number of records to be checked will be less, there will still be the same number if not more employers covered by the wages councils.

The absence of records for a significant proportion of workers will present new difficulties. As a result of the exclusion of those up to the age of 21, unscrupulous employers could simply not keep the records required by clause 18(1), especially for home workers. At present, many inspections are confined to the records and the underpayment of workers for whom records are, illegally, not kept will go undetected. Inspectors will have a greater need to interview workers to discover their ages which, at present, employers are required to record. Such interviews would be extremely time-consuming. The Minister has not thought that through.

With regard to home workers, the inspectorate will be completely powerless to carry out any check if the employer denies using home workers under the age of 21. Most of the Minister's claims to justify the proposed cuts in the wages inspectorate are bogus. The exclusion of young workers will not mean less work. The workers may be fewer in number, but the number of firms will be

greater. In Committee, the Minister said that more firms would register. We argue that the 21-plus rule introduces an additional age check. From today's debate we learn that the Minister has not thought through the effect of increasing the powers of the wages inspectorate as a consequence of clause 22. That is an obvious case of the Minister not thinking through the need for additional wages inspectors.

How many staff have been allocated to the task of checking and how many will be allocated to cope with the additional responsibilities? In Committee, the Minister claimed that it should be possible to increase the number of postal checks. Such checks are ineffectual and allow the potential underpaying employer a self-check. It also gives an advance warning of a possible factory inspector visit. In how many other areas does a law enforcement officer give advance notice of a visit to check whether an offence has been committed? I hope that the Minister will give details of his plans to expand the postal questionnaire.

The Minister has an opportunity to make the wages inspectorate a truly effective policing body, but he intends to cut that body by 40 per cent. At present, an employer in the wages councils sector can expect, on average, to have a visit from an inspector once every 12 or 14 years. Even then, the employer is forewarned. It is no wonder that there are so few prosecutions. *[Interruptions.]* It is quite clear that the Minister is not following the argument.

Mr. Trippier: I disagree with it.

Mr. Pendry: If the Minister disagrees, he has every right to intervene.

I do not believe that the Minister can disagree with a great deal of what I have said, as sometimes his own logic would draw similar conclusions. It is no wonder that there are so few prosecutions. Even when there are prosecutions they hardly make a dent in employers' profit margins.

Recent figures from the Department of Employment show just how few prosecutions occur. In 1979, there were 12 investigations which resulted in prosecution and conviction. In 1980 there were eight, in 1981 there were eight, in 1982 there were seven and in 1983 and 1984 there were two.

At constant June 1985 prices, the average amount of fines paid out was £177 in 1979, £246 in 1980, £446 in 1981 and £107 in 1984. There were 8,227 complaints recorded in 1982 and 8,027 in 1983. There were six prosecutions in England in 1982. In 1983 there were two. In 1982 and 1983 there were none in Wales. In Scotland there was one in 1982 and none in 1983. All these figures show the kind of operation which is presently in practice. So much for the Minister's claim that he is concentrating on the worst offenders. Anyone who believes that will believe anything.

A comparison of the number of such prosecutions with the number for television licence evasion makes unlikely reading. In 1984 there were 109,143 prosecutions for television licence evasion. Also in 1984, 27,000 people were prosecuted for not having a licence fixed to their cars. Some 226,000 people were prosecuted for registration offences and some 192,308 people were prosecuted for vehicle test offences.

I could go on, but I do not wish to labour the point. The offences in industry are far worse than some of those offences, but the employers go unpunished. Few of the people prosecuted for the other offences were given a second chance — they were prosecuted on their first offence. Prosecution in industry should be for the first offence. Some employers are punishing the low-paid workers in our community who are sometimes on the poverty line.

There should be an annual listing of prosecutions not brought and detailed reasons for non-prosecution. We could then judge effectively how the Bill is operated and have more meaningful debates on the subject.

The case for amendment No. 75 and amendment No. 77 was made out in Committee when practical illustration after practical illustration was given to the Minister, especially by my hon. Friends the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo). They described the sweatshop conditions in the east end of London and in Birmingham, and they may give some more examples tonight. The Minister appeared to be listening in Committee as he appears to be listening now, but he does not often respond in a fair and reasonable manner. In truth, I feel a weeny bit sorry for him because he is not in charge of the Bill and nor is his right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General. The long arm of the Treasury effectively controls the Bill. Nevertheless, the Minister's inconsistencies are considerable. In Committee, he said that he wanted an improvement in the register of firms under the purview of the wages inspectorate. He admitted that a number of employers were illegally evading registration. Surely, the logical conclusion of that must be that, if there are more firms, there must be more factory inspectors. The Minister also said he wanted more prosecutions, and the logical conclusion of that must be that there should be more inspectors.

The Minister does not follow his own logic. If he did, he would support our amendments. The Minister's failure to do so shows that he is not in command of the situation. The Government are softer on law and order than anyone thought hitherto. Many unkind people say that the Government are looking after their friends by introducing this legislation. Others would say, more accurately, that the Government's intention is to scrap wages councils. The Bill is a first step in that direction. We will not have to wait too long, however, to have a Government who will reverse that trend. In the meantime, the damage done by legislation such as this must be resisted with all our power.

It is quite possible that following the example of what happened with the Shops Bill, Conservative Members in another place will have a more sensible debate than we have had, and the Bill might be legislated out of sight. If we do not divide the House, it is not because we do not feel strongly about the amendments, but because of lack of time. We await the Minister's reply and expect the other place to hear this debate. It will be able to draw its own conclusions.

All is not lost, however. The Minister might realise that what he said on Radio 4 on 24 April about coming down like a ton of bricks on bad employers can be achieved only by supporting our amendments.

8 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): This is a subject on which we could go on at great length, expressing our disgust. If ever a clause needed attention, this is it. Before the Committee stage, the House raised the

[Mr. Ken Eastham]

shortage of wages inspectors with Ministers during Question Time. We deliberated the matter at great length in Committee.

The Government's desire to cut the protection of workers is now exposed. The Minister is shaking his head in disagreement. I do not believe that he could make a genuine case justifying reducing the number of wages inspectors. I look forward to his speech, knowing that the only case that the Government can make is rotten.

I should like to put the matter in perspective by illustrating what happens in Manchester. There are only six wages inspectors for the whole of the Greater Manchester area in which there are 25,000 workplaces. Each inspector is therefore responsible for more than 4,000 workplaces.

Mr. Mikardo: Perhaps my hon. Friend would like to carry the arithmetic a little further. If each of the inspectors inspected five establishments a day, which would be a pretty full day's work, he would get round to each establishment once every 18 years on average.

Mr. Eastham: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. They would be extremely fortunate to manage five visits a day as there is paper work to be done, all manner of documentation, and travelling time.

I recall the Minister trying to pacify the Committee by saying that inspectors cope in other ways. They have the magical method, he told us, of going through the Yellow Pages and telephoning factories, presumably asking each, "Are you still operating? Are you abiding by the wages council's guidelines? Could you tell us whether you are breaking the law?" One can just imagine the employers replying, "Yes. Everything is right here. We pay the right rate and conditions are right." That is absurd, but the Government are not satisfied. They have decided to reduce the number of inspectors still further. I remember my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) asking about the decline in the number of wages inspectors. The Minister admitted that there would be further reductions.

When some trade unions made inquiries among working groups in wages council establishments, they discovered that two thirds of the workers were unaware of their legal rights. I realise that that slots in nicely with what the Government want. The Minister said earlier that the Government consulted the employers, who wanted this, that and the other. He never talked about consulting the trade unions and asking them about the Bill.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that we consulted the trade unions. We discussed this matter at great length in Committee.

Mr. Eastham *rose*——

Ms. Clare Short: But the Government did not listen to them.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Lady says that we did not listen. The wages councils have not been completely abolished, so we did listen to a certain extent, did we not?

Mr. Eastham: That is marvellous. What a revelation. The Minister claims that the fact that we still have wages councils proves that the Government listened to the trade unions. Never mind the Bill, he argues, we have a sop in that we still have wages councils. So that is the Minister's consultation. I bet that he want into far more detail with the employers. I bet that he went through the Bill clause by clause establishing what they wanted. The Committee stage lasted nearly three months, but very little has been given to worker groups and the trade unions.

We are faced with sheer hypocrisy. The Government are turning a blind eye to any malpractice and any breach of the law. Anything that employers can get away with goes. The Government applaud this new type of management, which is a form of legal gangsterism. The workshops that are covered by wages inspectors enjoy the worst working conditions.

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Name one.

Mr. Eastham: Never mind about "Name one"; we would be here for about two years giving a list if we were given a little time.

Ms. Short: In a minute I hope to make a speech, and I shall tell the Minister of at least 25 firms in my constituency which are breaking the law—information for which he asked in Committee.

Mr. Eastham: If the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) took the trouble even to visit his back yard, never mind the rest of Greater Manchester, the midlands and London, he would probably find scores of such companies. I should be pleased if the media investigated the matter and inquired whether some factories fit within that category. Perhaps we could arrange for inquiries to be made, in view of the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Workshops are usually unorganised and, unfortunately, without trade unions. Often the majority of workers are women, who are often traditionally timid. That gives rise to gross abuse, and advantage being taken of the workers.

On many occasions the Minister admitted that he recognised there were cases of underpayment. That is one of the biggest and most important issues to which wages inspectors apply themselves. The Minister admitted that an underpayment of £11·9 million over five years had been discovered. Obviously, he immediately said that the wages inspectors intervened and managed to recoup 80 per cent. of that sum. But the fewer inspectors, the greater the sums that will be stolen from workers because of reduced policing action. The truth is that neither the Minister nor the Government want to know because this is a pay-off to employers. With an election approaching, the Government promise this, that and the other, and this time the pay-off is that employers will be allowed to introduce rotten conditions.

I shall conclude by reinforcing some points which my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) eloquently put on the record. Home workers are the most exploited worker group. Usually they are married women who cannot go out to work, perhaps because they have young children or sick parents to look after. Consequently, they are not in a position of strength, and are isolated. Their only hope is for support in legislation and from wages inspectors.

This is a blatant example of the Government encouraging sweatshops. The Minister may argue that this new Bill is better than the last Bill, but there is no reason to make it a rotten Bill because the previous one had some inadequacies. Today, we should be introducing a good Bill with clauses which benefit both sides, but this Bill is extremely one-sided. It is loaded on the side of employers.

Ms. Clare Short: Amendment No. 75 requires the Government to appoint an adequate number of inspectors to enforce the law in all workplaces covered by wages councils orders. We are amazed that the Government will resist the amendment. If they resist it, they will be telling us that they do not intend the law to be enforced in all workplaces where wages councils orders should applv?

Amendment No. 76 says that there should be a change in prosecution policy. That is extremely important because the law has been widely breached and employers know that they will not be prosecuted. We want a change in the declared policy of not prosecuting on a first offence to normally prosecuting on a first offence. We do not mean on all occasions. On some occasions it may be reasonable not to prosecute, but we do not accept that the present policy is right. It is a blank cheque to employers to break the law, and they know it.

In Committee the Minister gave us an undertaking—he has been honourable in complying with most of his undertakings — that he would review the prosecution policy. We are looking forward to that review. It is an extremely important undertaking because the need for a change in prosecution policy is urgent.

The problem is that the old law has been widely broken and the inspectorate does not ensure that it is enforced. We now have a weaker law and a weakening of the inspectorate, so we can expect that law to be widely broken and that there will be virtually no standards. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) may get what he wants because, in practice, we will not have wages council and the law will not matter in most sectors of industry. There is a real danger of that.

In Committee, the Minister undertook to make a special examination of the new textile industry in my constituency. I am not asking for any special favours for my constituency, but I would like the law to be applied there. That seems to be a reasonable request.

8.15 pm

Mr. Holt: The hon. Lady referred to her constituency. May I remind her that in Committee she also talked about her constituency and said:

"Tuberculosis has reappeared in my area. People who do not have proper housing or clothing and are not eating properly are vulnerable to such diseases". — [*Official Report, Standing Committee K,* 10 April 1986; c. 508.]

That is exaggerated language. I took the trouble to find out the facts. From 1974 to 1984 the number of cases of tuberculosis in Birmingham fell from 477 to 293.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am finding it difficult to relate these remarks to the amendment.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman's information may be right, but I recently visited a youth training scheme workshop from which two young men had left with TB. That was the case to which I was referring, and I can give chapter and verse to the hon. Gentleman, if that is what he wants. TB has reappeared among young males whom one would not normally expect to have TB. Both the people who run the workshop and I find that shocking, and it is worthy of comment.

The Minister undertook to look into the problems in my constituency, and asked me to provide him with whatever information I could find about them. The experience of my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) of the textile industry in his constituency is noteworthy. My constituency is not a traditional textile area. The new textile industry in the west midlands developed in the late 1970s and accompanied the great rise in unemployment. I have gone to some trouble to answer the Minister's request.

A project called Aekta is based in my constituency and seeks to work, particularly with Asian workers, in the largely Asian new textile industry so that their legal rights are enforced. It produced a report, which was published yesterday, on how the law is widely breached—I hope that the Minister is listening.

Mr. Trippier: I am listening.

Ms. Short: —the Minister is not listening—and how the inspectorate does not assist individuals who approach it for help. The report gives chapter and verse. It is shocking, and I should like to give a copy to the Minister, together with a list of employers, compiled by the project, who are known to have broken the law. I ask the Minister to look at them, and not merely to put the matter right in Ladywood, but to draw lessons about what is going on elsewhere.

The law is being widely flouted. If the Minister proceeds with his present proposals to cut the wages inspectorate and to continue with a no prosecutions policy on a first offence, the law will continue to be flouted. The Government are almost encouraging employers to turn a blind eye to the law. It is outrageous.

In my area, there is an association of the owners of those firms. They advise each other on how to get round the law, and the inspectorate is probably convinced that they do not know the law. It is no excuse for someone to say that he does not know the criminal law. It is time that we prosecuted employers who break the law; then they would all start complying with it. I ask the Minister seriously to comply with the undertaking which he gave in Committee to review prosecution policy. If he reviews it, he will have to concede our other amendment, whether tonight or later, and appoint more wages inspectors because the law cannot be enforced by the present inadequate number or the number after the threatened cut in inspectors.

Mr. Trippier: I am happy to confirm that I am anxious to review the prosecution policy. I am also anxious to study in detail the information which the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) has brought to my attention. In Committee, the hon. Lady sought to draw the attention of all hon. Members to the problem in her constituency. As the Minister responsible for this area, I must consider carefully the position there. No Minister of any Government would condone the breaking of the law.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) made an uncharacteristic, unfriendly and unkind speech. I have come to know and respect the hon. Gentleman over many years, but he broke with tradition today. I could not believe what I heard. Although the hon. Gentleman was right in quoting accurately from the first part of the letter that I sent to him — I stand by the figures I gave—he did not mention the second page of the letter, which I shall strengthen and develop in my reply to the debate. Indeed, it will form the substantive part of my reply to him and to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham)——

Mr. Eastham: It was a very weak second page.

Mr. Trippier: No. I spent a long time putting it together. It was not a case of speaking off the top of my head. It was well prepared, well thought out and researched.

I wish to go a little further than the hon. Member for Blackley was prepared to go in his speech. He quoted what I said on the "Today" programme on Radio 4. It is true that I said that I wanted to take a firmer line, but I also said that we should not come down like a ton of bricks. I also said that it was important to recognise that, as a result of our simplifying the wages council orders, there would be less likelihood of an employer praying in aid the fact that he could not understand the wages council order and that that was why he was underpaying his worker by mistake. All members of the Standing Committee agreed on that point.

Let me try to develop the argument that I put in the letter to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, which still bears close examination. First, I said that, as a result of the legislation,

"wages orders will not have any of the present complexities and it will be simpler and quicker to check compliance; there will be much less likelihood of underpayment due to employers being unable to understand the intentions of councils; workers will be clear about their legal entitlement; the number of workers whose pay has to be checked will be about 20 per cent. less because those under 21 years of age are to be excluded; and it should be possible to increase the proportion of initial checks carried out by postal questionnaire."

Mr. Eastham: The Minister's remarks show that it does not matter about those below the age of 21. It reduces the numbers.

Mr. Trippier: That is not the point and the hon. Gentleman knows it. We are talking about two different things. We are talking about taking those aged under 21 out of the purview of the wages councils. What joins the Opposition and the Government is that we are determined to ensure that the law is observed. By any standards, the figures given by the Opposition on Second Reading and in Committee are wildly exaggerated. During the past three years, 5 per cent. of the workers whose pay was checked by inspectors were found to be underpaid. We are worried about the percentage of workers, at least, that is what I thought we were discussing in Committee.

Mr. Eastham *rose*——

Mr. Trippier: May I finish this exposition of my letter to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde? The sixth point was that a significant reduction in the inquiries received by wages inspectorate officers is expected. On compliance with wages council legislation, I said that figures were not available yet for Greater Manchester. How the hon. Member for Blackley can say that he has the figure when we have not made a decision on it stretches credulity to breaking point.

Mr. Eastham: It is no great state secret. I got the information from the Low Pay Unit.

Mr. Trippier: I could have put money on its being the Low Pay Unit.

Ms. Clare Short: It is usually right.

Mr. Trippier: We have had some disputes about what the Low Pay Unit says, and we discussed it at some length in Committee. I assure the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde and his hon. Friends, including the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo), who is worried about it, that I am anxious, where possible, to ensure that there is compliance. It cannot be in the interests of any Government to be seen to encourage people to break the law. It cannot be good for the industries in the wages council sector.

The worst signal that could go to employers is going out from this debate. The Opposition are signalling the fact that employers can get away with it. That is the exact point that I was anxious to make on the "Today" programme. I make it clear again on the Floor of the House that the people who assume that they will get away with it can forget it.

Mr. Mikardo: Does the Minister believe that the employers in the sweatshop industries did not know before today's debate that they could get away with breaking the law? I listened to him with care, but I must tell him that I gave up believing in fairy tales at the age of seven.

I shall detain the House for only a minute to make a simple point. I often understand a Minister's rejection of an amendment even when I do not agree with it, but I am bound to say that the Minister's rejection of amendment No. 75 is incomprehensible. It beggars belief. Here is the Minister with his big talk about our all wanting the law to be enforced, but he refuses to accept the obligation to appoint an adequate number of inspectors to ensure that the law is complied with. The Minister is saying, "I want the law to be complied with, but I will not take the one measure without which we cannot ensure that the law will be complied with."

Mr. Trippier: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

8.30 pm

Mr. Mikardo: I shall give way later, because I wish to ask the Minister a question.

I am trying to persuade one of my noble Friends in the other place to table an amendment, because I want to suss out the sincerity of the Department of Employment. I want him to table an amendment saying:

"The Minister shall appoint a number of inspectors inadequate to ensure that the law is complied with".

This would create a situation in which the employer can break the law with impunity. Will the Government spokesman accept that with avidity, because that is the only logical consequence? I remind the Minister that he is speaking for the party that claims to be the party of law and order. This representative of the party of law and order is now saying, "I am going to give encouragement to employers to break the law with impunity, as I refuse to set up the machinery that prevents them from doing it."

Mr. Trippier: But I am not going to say that.

Amendment 75, as worded, if strictly interpreted would present the Government, any Government, with an impractical task, a mandatory requirement to provide

"an adequate number of inspectors to ensure that the law is complied with in all workplaces".

That is truly unrealistic, and the hon. Gentleman knows it.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move amendment No. 76, in page 19, line 32, at end insert

'. and if it appears to any such officer that any person with whom he has dealings while so acting does not know that he is an officer acting for the purposes of this Part he shall identify himself as such to that person.'.

There was a full debate in Committee on whether wages inspectors should as a matter of course automatically

produce their authenticated documents on every occasion on which they had dealings with any person in connection with enforcing part II of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) argued forcefully that this was essential on the grounds of courtesy and common sense and because officials generally had too many powers of entry. The Government took the view that the act of producing the warrant, as the inspector's document is called, tends to create a barrier of officialdom between employer and inspector and can prevent the inspection from being carried out in a helpful and constructive manner.

I indicated to the Committee that in practice the inspector initially identifies himself by means of a printed visiting card that shows his name, office address and telephone number which the employer or worker can retain for future reference. This arrangement, readily acceptable to the employer, has worked well for many years. He always produces his warrant when asked to do so.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo), like my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington, put a fairly compelling case. Although the amendment was lost in Committee, none the less I thought it fair, in view of what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington and by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar, to return with this amendment, which I think meets in part, if not totally, the points raised in Committee.

Mr. Fallon: I thank my hon. Friend for going even further than his original undertaking. As I recall, he undertook to look at the matter again if I withdrew the amendment.

The dispute in Committee arose from the distinction between the officer identifying himself — none of us wants bogus people on the premises or people falsely claiming to be officers of various departments — and establishing the rights given to him under the schedule and his ability to exercise them on the premises. I think that this is a rather confused area, although in the main my hon. Friend has gone further than he did originally when several times he attempted to dissuade us from dividing the Committee.

I hope that the amendment will be satisfactory to the inspectors. I know that my hon. Friend was concerned that their task should be made no more difficult. I am sure that it will be satisfactory to those business men for whom the first visit from the inspectors can be a traumatic experience.

I am delighted to welcome the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

New Clause 6

Redundancy Payments

'The provisions of Part III of the Act shall not take effect until the national insurance payments made by employers and employees into the redundancy fund are reduced to a level sufficient to cover no more than the likely costs to the fund of redundancy payments.'.—*[Mr. Prescott.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Prescott: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 80, in clause 32, page 29, line 39, leave out 'August' and insert 'November'.

Mr. Prescott: There are two principles embodied in these proposals. New clause 6 is concerned with the principles of the contribution and distributiom of the redundancy fund. Amendment No. 80 is concerned largely with the date. Dealing with the times from which the proposals in the Bill would apply to remove the rebate of 35 per cent. to companies employing over 10 people in redundancy situations, the date is 1 August. Although the date in the Bill, as I recall, is 31 July, it is effectively applicable from 1 August.

The debate in Committee showed that we recognise that the redundancy fund established in 1965 has covered different forms of rebates. It started with something like 75 per cent. This was changed by the previous Labour Government to 50 per cent. A year or so ago it went to about 35 per cent., the level at which it remains.

The operations of the fund are such that it is a contributory fund in terms of the employee and the employer. Its profits in its last year of operation were about £9 million, according to the last annual report, with approximately £751 million in receipts. While that is not a large amount, the fund is in surplus and has attracted the attention of the Chancellor. The first mention of it came in the Budget speech when he proposed to remove the 35 per cent. rebate in the case of companies with more than 10 employees. The Chancellor estimates that there will be a saving of about £200 million. The justification, according to the Government, is that this would be used to fund some of the employment scheme measures, particularly those which are long term. It is a pity that the moneys that we are always finding from one source or another are all for employment schemes and never to do with real training or jobs, but that is the nature of this Government's approach.

It is perhaps appropriate that we should be debating this on the day on which the unemployment figure is at a record level of well over 3·2 million. Considering that and the scale of redundancies, the levels of unemployment in the country are on a scale comparable to the 1930s. Unemployment now lasts longer and has been increasing every year for six years. In the 1930s, the increase each year continued for four years. That is the scale of change in the economy that has taken place in recent years. That has had an effect on redundancies and subsequently the great claims that are being made. After the recent announcement, there are to be further redundancies in a number of companies.

Our position was made clear in Committee. We did not wish to amend the relevant clause or the one concerning dates and times. We thought that the redundancy fund was paying out fairly. The 35 per cent. kept it in balance with a surplus of £9 million.

If the Government were so concerned about the money, perhaps the surpluses could be paid off, as our amendment suggests, to the employers and the employees by making a reduction in their contributions. Instead, the Government have chosen to save money and use it in another way. The case is not unique. There is a strong feeling that, with contributory funds, the Government are denying the rights for which the people paying and then denying them benefits promised from the fund. Employees and employers were promised that they would receive in redundancy cases a 35 per cent. rebate. That was changed, which is a denial of benefit to people who have paid into the redundancy fund.

[Mr. Prescott]

My memory goes back to the graduated pension fund, another great swindle perpetrated on the British electorate. Despite the fact that people had paid contributions, the Government finished the fund, the money was transferred and the benefits were either denied or were so small as not to be worth a great deal. The earnings-related benefit is a more modern example. If a private company had changed the fund in the same way, it would have been taken to court. The Government, with their power, can raid public funds, and today another public fund is raided to finance some of the Government's other policies—in this case, employment schemes. We have not sought to amend the Bill in this way, but we are making it clear that, to be fair, the surplus should go to those employers and employees who have contributed.

We hear a great deal from the Government about the costs of industry, and here we are talking about, as the CBI pointed out, an extra £200 million of costs on industry for financing redundancies. Unemployment is continually increasing, and no member of the Government is able to say when it will stop doing so, let alone go down. We can assume that redundancies will continue apace. If we wanted any reminder of that, we have only to listen to the radio or watch the television today. About 4,000 people are to lose their jobs in the shipyards; British Caledonian will be making 1,000 redundant; and today the first suggestion came of more redundancies, at British Rail Engineering Ltd, which will mean that a few more thousand are unemployed, leaving BR ready for the privatisation proposed by the Government, or the transfer of the parcels business. Perhaps many of these companies will be encouraged to rush through their redundancy programmes because substantial amounts of money are still available under the 35 per cent. rebate on redundancy.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) asked whether the 90-day principle applied. Clearly, if it were applicable until August, 90 days before that would be 1 May. If a company — say, British Caledonian or British Shipbuilders — puts in an application now, will the company be able to get the money for redundancies? If it will, that will encourage companies to throw people out of work much more quickly than they might otherwise do. In that sense, the Government may be using their £200 million for employment schemes, but they have created a financial incentive for people to be thrown out of work at a faster rate. We may not have seen the end of that, because this can run up to 1 August.

Perhaps it is the Paymaster General's view that, by bringing the scheme forward to August, the Government will avoid a mass of redundancies because people will wait even longer than a year. The Minister needs to give us a clear answer showing how that applies. An answer was not given in Committee, and Ministers may not have known it. However, the Minister should tell us the position of a company that makes application for payment under the fund. Is the payment allowable on the day that the redundancy takes place or from when the company gives notice and makes the application for the redundancy fund?

That brings us directly to our amendment, which is about setting a time. In Committee on 29 April, the date of 31 July was written into the Bill, but that is creating a number of problems. The first is that to which I have just referred — companies rushing through redundancy schemes. A second difficulty arises out of other legislation. In Committee on the Transport Act, we warned that the Act would bring about many redundancies and reductions in services, and that deregulation would be disastrous. The Government have never accepted that argument, but it seems that the by-elections and local elections have painfully printed it on their minds.

8.45 pm

Mr. Nellist: My hon. Friend may be interested in the figures from the west midlands. We already know that 500 of the 1,800 buses in the west midlands will stay in the garages from 26 October. If this part of the Bill goes through unamended, with the loss of the 35 per cent. rebate to the transport authorities, which have already had their grants cut by the Secretary of State for Transport, the redundancies, with which I disagree, will be even higher because the authorities will have to find the 35 per cent. as well as the cuts in the transport supplementary grant.

Mr. Prescott: I was coming to that point.

The passenger transport executives, or the district authorities such as Hull, will have many difficulties. Several of my hon. Friends may mention the case of south Yorkshire, where all the PTEs expect redundancies as a result of the reorganisation now that the subsidies and funding for transport have been reduced. South Yorkshire will lose about 1,800 jobs. All the PTEs together will lose about 9,000.

This is a problem not just for the PTEs but for the municipal bus corporations. In previous legislation, it was agreed that there will be a transfer to another body—for example, in Hull, to a private company. The local authorities cannot give financial support to those companies from 25 October. That would mean that the transfer has to be done by August. Therefore, most PTEs and municipal authorities, with the reorganisation required of them by previous legislation, took into account the redundancies that will take place and the cost of financing them. However, they are now being denied the 35 per cent. rebate, which they assumed would apply to October or November — hence the relevance of our November amendment. The PTEs no longer have the resources to fund the level of redundancies except by cutting services or by making even more redundancies, and problems could be even more accelerated, bringing about yet more redundancies.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): There is no supplementary rate either.

Mr. Prescott: My hon. Friend reminds me about my next point — the similar legislation on financing that prevents councils from making a supplementary rate. Other legislation has not been co-ordinated with this date. The Chancellor saw a chance to get a few bob on the side to finance his employment scheme, and to take a penny off the rate of income tax. It would have been better to keep the tax at the same rate and fund the employment schemes, but he wants to give money to those who can well afford to live without tax cuts. He has robbed redundancy funds to find that money.

If the councils are not to raise a supplementary rate, how are they to get over their difficulties? If the Government would accept an amendment to extend the scheme to November, the PTEs could proceed to do what has already been determined under the financing of their

reorganisation as required under other legislation. On 29 April, the Minister made it clear, when challenged by a number of my hon. Friends:

"I have no doubt that we shall divide on it. If it assists the hon. Gentleman, I shall write to him and the hon. Member for Ladywood, with a copy to each member of the Committee, take on board the points made and explore still further whatever I undertook to consider this morning. I can say no more than that." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee K*, 29 April 1986; c. 879.]

I note that he wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and probably to one or two other members of the Committee. He made it clear in the letter that discussions were still being undertaken with the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment. He did not think that he would be able to amend the Bill on Report. There is a possibility therefore that he will have it amended in another place.

We should like to know what the Paymaster General thinks about this matter. Is he making desperate phone calls and conducting discussions? Perhaps he could enlighten the House as to what is happening on this important matter. What does he intend to do in another place to amend this point?

There is a great deal of anxiety among transport authorities at the moment. They have carried out their statutory obligations under other legislation but now find themselves forced against the wall. The Government, in all justice, could keep their principles by accepting the amendment. They could say that the change will not be applicable until 1 November.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): The Government have hit the jackpot again with part III. The trade unions and the employers, through the Confederation of British Industry, have said that they do not want the redundancy payments to be tampered with or effectively removed in relation to Government contributions. That point was revealed in an article in the *Financial Times* on 17 March, which we discussed fully in Committee. It showed that the Government are out of tune with what is happening in industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) made a number of pertinent points, and I should like to cover several other matters which cover future employment patterns and so discuss what the Government are putting on the employers' plate.

The Government's action over the qualification period for redundancy pay could mean, as my hon. Friend the Member for. Kingston upon Hull, East said, that redundancies will be declared in the near future. The Government's actions could accelerate the number of redundancies either before 1 August, or beyond that date, depending on the Paymaster General's reply about the 90-day period. The Government's action could spark off a considerable number of redundancies in companies which are considering rationalisation, and we have seen many examples of such redundancies this week.

When the Bill reaches the statute book, it could destabilise the labour market. An employer will ensure that he does not have long-term employees, and therefore will not have to bear the full burden of redundancy costs. In future, an employer might not necessarily declare a policy, but will work to a policy which will ensure that people are not on payrolls for more than two or three years. This will ensure that the employer has to pay only a minimum amount of redundancy pay at any one time. I could quote many examples of industries where that kind of attitude might be prevalent.

Redundancy payments have been funded on a commonsense approach. Through national insurance contributions, all industries contribute to the redundancy payments fund. The sole burden for redundancy payments is not placed on the industries which are having problems with finance or restructuring. The burden has been borne, to some extent, by profitable industries, and the employees in the successful industries have been paying into the central fund, which has been used to make redundancy payments. Responsibility has been shared across industry and commerce throughout the United Kingdom.

When part III reaches the statute book, it will compound the problems of the industries which are having difficulties with finance or restructuring. Liquidations and closures might be brought forward because, if there are more than 10 workers in a company, that company will have to bear 35 per cent. of the redundancy payments. Increasing the redundancy payment burden to 35 per cent. might tip the balance for a small company, employing 12 or 14 people, which was previously on an even keel. It could cause that small company to go into liquidation or bring in the receiver. The collective funding of redundancy will be altered and a company will have to bear the full cost of any redundancy pay. Rather than helping small businesses or industries which are in financial difficulties or which are restructuring, the Government are compounding their problems.

I should like to consider amendment No. 80, which is important for my constituency in south Yorkshire. If the amendment is not accepted, or if there is no response from the Government to our proposition, there could be serious problems for constituencies such as mine.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, was fortunate to receive a letter from the Minister. In Committee I asked:

"Will the Minister do the same with the Department of Transport, with regard to transport supplementary grant? Probably as profound a case can be made on this as has been made by my hon. Friend on the local authorities."

The Minister replied:

"Absolutely, I am delighted to respond to the hon. Gentleman on that point."[*Official Report, Standing Committee K*, 29 April 1986, c. 870.]

I have not received a letter on that issue, and I have not seen the correspondence to which my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, referred.

South Yorkshire passenger transport executive is probably the executive that has been hit hardest. It has had to bear about £30 million worth of cuts in transport supplementary grant. This has caused fare increases of 250 to 300 per cent. It has also meant a reduction in services, and a reduction of 35 per cent. in the number of passengers carried.

The effect of the Transport Act 1985 on south Yorkshire has been to rip the heart out of the community. Now, in this part of the Bill, we see the vultures of the Department of Employment homing in to pinch another £1·5 million to £2 million. This means that we could see further redundancies, in addition to the 1,600 redundancies which south Yorkshire will experience as a result of the Transport Act.

South Yorkshire made representations to the Secretary of State for Transport on the transport supplementary grant. In Committee the Minister refused even to look at

[Mr. Richard Caborn]

the redundancy payments issue, but at least the calculation of the transport supplementary grant did include something for redundancies. From that date to this, as a result of part III, the full cost will have to be borne. It is estimated that in south Yorkshire this will be about £1·5 million.

Will south Yorkshire reduce services further and have more redundancies? It will not be able to go out to tender or subsidise those routes. Will it put the fares up? It can do that, and if it does there is every chance that passenger numbers will decline again, leading to further redundancies.

9 pm

It is now incumbent upon the Paymaster General to answer the questions that we put in Committee. Those questions must be answered within the next few weeks, because the tenders for those routes have gone out and decisions have to be made. It might mean that the executive will bring forward the redundancies to some time in July, to protect the services and stop further fare increases.

Unless the Paymaster General or a Minister from the Department of Transport gives us a decision, things will be extremely difficult for PTEs throughout the country. It is estimated that as a result of the movement of three months they will lose about £9 million which will effectively be taken away from the subsidies for the routes, many of which will be rural routes, which I have no doubt many Conservative Members would wish to maintain.

I hope that the Paymaster General will accept the modest amendments. If he is not prepared to do so, it is incumbent upon him to tell us how the PTEs and the other local authorities will operate.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Amendment No. 80 contains an entirely reasonable and responsible proposition, and it is that proposition to which my brief remarks will be addressed. This matter should not be considered now; it should already have been resolved. The Government clearly bear a serious responsibility and it should have been accepted before now.

My hon. Friends the Members for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) have put the basic arguments. The fact remains that the PTEs have been placed in a dreadful position over their redundancies. They have been put in that position as a result of the timing in the Bill. I imagine that if any Minister were here from the Department of Transport he would have to accept — he could not deny — that the arrangements made by the PTEs have been dreadfully imperilled, and they were made at the behest of this Administration.

As the Bill stands, the proposals mean that PTEs in south Yorkshire and elsewhere face substantial burdens which in this financial year may be intolerable. They made those arrangements in response to Government policy, and the Secretary of State for Transport was well aware of them and could be said to have been a party to those arrangements.

As has been pointed out, the PTEs cannot raise interim revenue directly. Rate capping and other local authority expenditure controls make that clear. Nor can they guarantee to raise the income which will otherwise be required if the Government do not accept the amendment, because if they increase fares, the certainty in south Yorkshire is that ridership will decline, and income might be diminished rather than enhanced. The PTEs cannot easily make additional redundancies. The burden accepted is already well nigh intolerable. In any case, if they make additional redundancies they could aggravate the situation about which we are complaining now.

As a result of the Bill, passenger transport executives are being squeezed between the upper millstone of Government negligence and the lower millstone of Government incompetence. The Secretary of State for Transport is not present, but someone from that Department should be here. The passenger transport executive acted in good faith. It was not enthusiastic about the arrangements. We in south Yorkshire do not like the arrangements, and I do not think that any of the other PTEs in metropolitan areas like them either. The PTE made a democratic response to statute, and now the Government have changed the ground rules. That is intolerable.

I should have thought that at least a junior Minister from the Department of Transport would have the grace to come to the House to make it clear that that problem, which the Department created, and which the Department of Employment is now compounding, exists. In the absence of such a Minister, the Paymaster General must make a responsible response to the House; otherwise the Government will once again be shown up in a very poor light. By their response to amendment No. 80, the Government will demonstrate whether they are prepared to act with integrity, like a sensible Administration.

Before we conclude this debate, I hope that the Government will recognise that the PTEs have a powerful case. The Government should respond to it and relieve the anxieties that exist in my PTE area in south Yorkshire and in all the other PTE areas. I trust that the Paymaster General will reassure us that there will not be any insistence on the irresponsibility and incompetence to which I have referred.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I wish to reinforce the arguments made about the clause and the amendment. I am sure that the Paymaster General did not envisage the problems that would be created by altering the redundancy scheme, particularly in relation to the south Yorkshire PTE. When legislation makes a change, there is always a dividing line, and there are always problems with it. There are always losers and winners on either side of the dividing line. The problem is where to draw it.

I believe that the Government are slowly moving towards not making any contributions at all. People will be dismissed, and will get just a vote of thanks before moving down the road. We are discussing how the legislation will affect, in particular, the south Yorkshire PTE. We pointed out the problems that deregulation would cause and we will be proved right. South Yorkshire has had to cut about 30 per cent. of its traffic. By and large that affects the rural areas, weekend services, and school and hospital services. I have a list of the services being tendered for. There are fairly isolated areas round Penistone, but there are no Sunday or Saturday services. The first bus into Penistone is at 8 am and the last bus out is at 7 pm. We do not yet know how people will get to work. That is why we are trying to overcome some of these problems.

No one knows what the cost to the local education authority will be. After all, all the school services have

been stopped. I accept that the process has not yet come to an end. But this is where the legislation is relevant. The £9 million that it will cost the south Yorkshire PTE is the £9 million that it hopes to use for subsidies. Thus, one Department is not thinking about the effect of its legislation on another. The amendment does not make a very big change, but it is a sensible change. There is nothing to stop the Paymaster General accepting it. He could give us an assurance that he will consider it, or arrange for the Bill to be altered in the other place. However, he should not dismiss our arguments out of hand by rejecting the amendment.

About 30 per cent. of our bus services have disappeared. I hope that we can find the money to reinstate them. If the Bill is not amended, the PTE will have to make 1,600 people redundant immediately. That is the only way that it can save £9 million to £10 million. However, we are approaching the holiday period and, if it makes 1,600 people redundant, how will it cope with holiday absences? It would mean even less services.

Of course, the PTE could try to recoup the finance from another area. However, fares have already risen by 250 to 300 per cent. and there has also been a severe cut in services. If the PTE has to raise fares again, that will mean even fewer services and more redundancies. Where will the PTE find the money? Local authorities cannot increase rates or they will face rate capping. It is a catch-22. Without any shadow of doubt, the problems are very serious.

I am sure that the Paymaster General did not consider the problems that would be caused. Government policy has caused problems by deregulation of transport, and Government policy will cause further problems with transport, which the local authorities will have to overcome. Rather than compound the problems, the Government should accept an amendment that would help to alleviate them.

All local authorities budget for a 12-month period. Indeed, the Government have stopped local authorities from making any interim rate increases. That is another outlet that the Government have blocked, and there are no longer any gaps or outlets for the PTE. I ask the Government seriously to consider the problems that this legislation will cause. It is bad legislation. Local authorities have budgeted on the Government's original intentions, and that should not be altered now.

Mr. Nellist: My hon. Friend said that one avenue of escape for the south Yorkshire PTE was to bring forward the 1,600 redundancies. The social security costs for 1,600 sacked workers must be about £100,000 or £200,000 a week, so for every week that the redundancies are brought forward the DHSS will have to find a couple of hundred thousand pounds. That is another financial idiocy in this part of the Bill.

Mr. McKay: My hon. Friend is right — the Bill shuffles the problems from one Department to another. It is hardly the way to treat workers who have worked for a firm for 30 or 40 years. All the planning has been carried out in accordance with Government wishes.

Mr. Caborn: The PTE faces another problem. Within the normal functioning of a commercial department, the profit from one area can be transferred to a less profitable area; it is called cross-subsidisation. However, that option has been removed by the Transport Act. The PTE cannot transfer profits from a route in a city or town to a less profitable route. Every avenue has been closed.

Mr. McKay: Every loophole has been closed and there is no room left to manouevre. It is ridiculous to introduce such proposals halfway through a financial year. If a local authority had done that, there would be slapped wrists and bottoms. If the Paymaster General thinks about the problems a little more deeply, he will come to realise that he should never have brought forward the proposal.

We are asking the Minister to have another think. The Government will not gain anything by implementing this provision because any benefit to them will be lost in DHSS payments. The people need to be treated in a better way than that which the Government propose.

9.15 pm

Mr. Dixon: This issue arose in Committee on 29 April. Any employer who pays out more than 100 employees must give 90 days' notice of his intention to do so. The idea of that notice—the Paymaster General should know this because he is the Minister in charge of labour relations —is to enable trade union representatives to negotiate with employers to ascertain whether some of the redundancies can be avoided or whether the impact of redundancies can be alleviated. For example, it is sometimes possible to arrange transfers. Any employer who wanted to qualify for the 35 per cent. discount would have had to give the unions notice two days after the Government's amendment was moved. The amendment was moved on 29 April and the 90-day requirement for negotiations with trade unions would have compelled employers to issue notices only two days afterwards.

We did not receive a satisfactory explanation from the Minister in Committee. He told us that a decision had been taken above his head and explained that it would save £55 million in public expenditure. In fact, he meant that £55 million would be stolen from the contributions made by employees and employers to the central fund.

The purpose behind the Government's amendment was to steal money from others, and they are damaging industrial relations. It will be impossible for anyone to qualify for the redundancy rebate and for the unions to be given 90 days notice to negotiate with the employer to try to avoid redundancies by, for example, arranging transfers.

Mr. Flannery: Those of us who were not members of the Committee are beginning only now to grasp the trickery that has gone on. The issue before us arose only on the Committee's final sitting. It is almost unbelievable that the Government should have introduced such a provocative measure at this stage. Anyone who canvassed prior to the local elections will realise that the Government are in a mess. They could not have planned their own demise more brilliantly.

We in south Yorkshire feel especially deeply about the Government's proposals. In part, that is because we have only just learnt about them. The ordinary people in the area are unaware of what has gone on. The Minister may laugh, but the facts have not been brought home to ordinary people.

In south Yorkshire, we have kept fares down to the best of our ability. There was a larger vote at every election for the Labour party because of its policy of holding down the

[Mr. Flannery]

level of fares. It was a process of real democracy. Rate capping pushed us into an extremely difficult position and the result was that fares had suddenly to be tripled. Indeed, they will have to be increased again.

On Saturday morning, I travelled into Sheffield from outside the town. I had to pay nearly four times as much for my ticket as I had been used to paying. I travelled on a one-man bus. Nowadays, most buses do not have clippies. The bus on which I travelled pulled up at every stop. Because it was a one-man bus, the driver was completely occupied collecting fares, to the danger of the public. On double decker buses, vandalism and activities of that nature could take place upstairs. That poses great difficulty. I cannot believe that the Government could plan to do what they have done at the last minute. If it were explained to an ordinary person, he would not believe that it could happen.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) implied at one point, in an otherwise careful, considered and clear speech, that we might be moving to a position whereby an employee who faces the unfortunate possibility of redundancy might lose his statutory entitlement. That is certainly not contemplated by the Government or the Bill. When we consider the amendments, we must bear in mind which part of the Bill they relate to. The Bill does not affect in the slightest the statutory entitlement to redundancy compensation of an employee who faces redundancy. The Bill aims to get rid of a method of financing companies that make redundancies — a method which in our opinion, is obsolete.

I shall not repeat the arguments I used on Second Reading to explain why economic circumstances have changed since the measure was introduced. The rebates actually make it cheaper and easier for an employer to contemplate redundancy. An employer receives a subsidy — it was reduced by the Labour Government and ourselves to 35 per cent.—which is taken out of a fund to which employers and employees contribute. It is a churning of money to make it easier to make people redundant. In the present conditions of unemployment, we did not think that that should continue.

Because the payments out of the fund, by the conventions used by former Governments and our own, technically count as public expenditure, we were able to make public expenditure savings which we have diverted to the other employment measures which we announced last autumn and in this year's Budget.

Neither the Opposition's proposed new clause nor their amendment challenges the fundamental policy decision to end the rebates. Both bear on the timing of the change. Assuming that the House carries the Bill, that it goes to another place and becomes law, I expect that, if the labour party ever came to power, it would not bring back the redundancy rebate system, in view of present labour circumstances.

The new clause and the amendment essentially urge delay. One says that we should delay until the contributions to the fund have been brought down so that the fund pays for redundancy payments only, and the other says that we should delay from August to November. That is the only issue before us regarding the new clause and the amendment.

I can understand, in some ways, the need for delay, but I do not think that it goes with the arguments that have been made to us about the fear that employers will somehow speed up redundancies in order to get the rebate. In my opinion, that is not a relevant consideration. Normally, employers declare redundancies only when they are forced to do so. They do so extremely reluctantly. Nobody times redundancies to get a rebate. I think that under the arrangement, an employer receives, on average, £600 each rebate. If an employer is contemplating redundancies and is tempted to speed them up then, of course, the more time that is given before the change comes into effect the more likely it is that people will act to speed up the redundancies.

The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) intervened briefly and said how bad it was that we had tabled an amendment in such a way that employers planning large redundancies, who had to give 90 days notice to the trade unions, had only two days in which to do so. If he really feels that there is a danger of employers rushing forward, which I do not agree with, all I can say is that if we give them more time there is more chance of them bringing forward redundancies.

We had to introduce an operative date. Whatever date we chose, there would have been hardship for some employers from a cash flow point of view. The more time we give, as advance warning, that we plan to end the rebates, the more likely it is that an employer who feels doomed to make redundancies, and for some reason is tempted to bring them forward to get the rebate, will actually do so. I do not follow that point.

I shall deal with the practical reasons why the new clause and the amendment are somewhat misconceived. It is important to realise that the fund is not just for redundancy payments. It will not be wound up completely. Last year, as well as paying out nearly £250 million in rebates to employers and £55 million direct to employees when their employer defaulted on the redundancy payments they were due, the fund paid out some £50 million to employees who were owed arrears of wages, accrued holiday pay, pay in lieu of notice and certain other debts when their employer had gone into liquidation, receivership or bankruptcy owing money to the employees. When the Bill is enacted, the fund will still be paying out statutory redundancy payments to those redundant workers whose firms could not afford to pay what they owed and will be paying out those other sums owed to employees when a firm unfortunately goes into receivership. The basis upon which the new clause is intended to operate is misconceived.

The new clause refers also to contribution levels by employers and employees to the inevitably reduced fund. I accept that that is a relevant point, but I point out that every autumn we review the contribution levels for national insurance generally. Any changes are included in the Social Security Contributions (Rerating) Order which both Houses debate in November or December each year. At present, the contributions to the redundancy fund represent 0·25 percentage points of the standard 9 per cent. employee's national insurance contribution and 0·15 percentage points of the employer's standard 10·45 percent. contribution. When the time comes to make the rerating order, obviously my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Social Services and the Chancellor will have to look at the total make up of what is required to finance all the national insurance funds.

Mr. Prescott: Put up the rates. That is another £200 million.

Mr. Clarke: The rates might even come down.

The fund is in surplus and, obviously, payments are not likely to go down. That is only one part of the picture. Under the present arrangements, all Governments have to consider all the components of the overall contribution together if they are to make any sensible changes. We cannot do that until the autumn.

It has been said that we are stealing the money from the fund. All sorts of allegations have been made. Obviously, some hon. Members have a vision of a swag bag being put over someone's shoulder and carried away.

Mr. Prescott: £200 million.

Mr. Clarke: Thanks to the accounting convention used by Governments, this is one of those marvellous public spending savings where we do not take away any money from the fund.

Changing the rebate entitlements in August, rather than next April, does not cost the fund any money. The £140 million which is saved stays in the fund and earns interest for the fund. But the reduction in public expenditure, which counts now, enables us to boost our spending on the positive employment measures which we announced in one instalment last November and again in this year's Budget.

For those reasons, I ask the House to accept that the new clause and the amendment which are designed to alter the time when a change comes into effect—I cannot believe that any hon. Member would contemplate reversing that — are misconceived and should be rejected.

The hon. Members for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) have raised a matter on behalf of the south Yorkshire passenger transport executive, and it is relevant also to the west midlands passenger transport executive and other such bodies. They are concerned with the impact on those groups if the Bill becomes operative in August and with possible redundancies that those PTEs will have to make as they prepare to make themselves more competitive and face up to the new position in the autumn. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East thought that this matter arose out of legislation we used to debate when we both spoke on transport Bills. We disagreed on the deregulation of coach transport and I have no doubt that we disagree in the same way about the deregulation of local bus services. I am an enthusiastic supporter of the recent Transport Act and I believe that improvements will come from deregulation.

9.30 pm

I do not think that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East or I would claim to have bang up-to-date knowledge of all the technical details which flowed from the Transport Bill, on which we were not directly engaged. I do not know that within the passenger transport authorities the PTEs are looking to a date when they will become separate entities with their own trading accounts. There is a tendering exercise to go through in the summer before we will know the full extent of the services available in south Yorkshire, the west midlands and elsewhere. I will not be drawn into debating the transport policies of the south Yorkshire passenger transport authority. I am on record as having discussed that in the past. I regarded the business of freezing the fares to some set date, which I believe was back in the 1960s, as absurd and loading the Government with subsidy and the ratepayers of Sheffield with an unnecessary burden. That is all behind us.

Having listened to the speeches, I know hon. Members obviously feel very strongly that a problem is being faced by the passenger transport authority. I have had some talks with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport following the exchanges that took place between my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and others in Committee and I shall certainly continue those discussions. Some of the figures bandied about as to the costs struck me as extraordinary. If, in order to enter the new competition, redundancies are contemplated, costs will obviously arise and the effect of those costs on passenger transport undertakings will depend on the day on which they take effect. I was asked some questions about that. If the redundancy is one of which notice has been given and which has taken effect before 1 August, rebate will be payable. If there is a late claim, after 1 August, but the redundancy became due before that date again, rebate will be payable. Thereafter, rebate will not be payable.

Until the tendering exercise has been undertaken, hon. Members cannot make assertions about what services they will or will not have, as the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone tried to do, and nobody can calculate with precision how many redundancies might be necessary. I have not claimed expertise on this matter. I have undertaken to consider the points made by the members from Yorkshire and the west midlands and to continue discussions with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to ensure that an announcement is made on behalf of the Government in time for consideration in another place.

Mr. Allen McKay: Is it correct that the Minister accepts that people made redundant before 1 August will be subject to rebate but those made redundant after 1 August will not? I do not accept the right hon. and learned Gentleman's arguments because one has to plan 12 months or two years ahead and, irrespective of what the Minister says, at least 1,600 people will be made redundant, even in the best scenario. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman saying that, if notice is given before 1 August that the PTE is expecting 1,600 redundancies in October, they will receive a rebate?

Mr. Clarke: If the notice is given and dismissal on the grounds of redundancy takes place before 1 August and the claim is made the rebate will be received. I shall happily continue to attend to those details and I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is considering the matter. As I have said, an announcement will be made on behalf of the Government.

Mr. Hardy: I recognise that the Minister appears to be moving in the direction of concession, but I should like to tie him down just a little. Does he not accept that he needs to consult the Secretary of State for Transport to establish one thing above all—that the Department of Transport, in effect, endorsed the plans for redundancies, which were under way in the passenger transport executives before the

[Mr. Hardy]

Bill received Second Reading? If the Secretary of State for Transport accepts that that was the case, the moral obligation on the Government is unanswerable.

Mr. Clarke: Before the hon. Gentleman assumes that I am moving in the direction of concession, I should like to tell him that, for example, to concede new clause 6 would cost about £140 million if it delayed the implementation of the change until April 1987, which it would at the earliest. To concede amendment No. 80 would cost £55 million of public expenditure, if we moved the implementation from August to November. No doubt many other industries would find that they would benefit from rebates if we chose the month of November, and they would not if we chose August. Because of the political position of transport and its position vis-à-vis local authorities and central Government, the south Yorkshire passenger transport executive has its usual ability to beat its way to the Chamber of the House of Commons, unlike other industries.

Nevertheless, what is being said is that it is the Government's policies and the two pieces of legislation that are giving rise to the problem. I have undertaken to do pretty well what the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) repeated — to carry on consultations, which I have already begun, with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. The Government will honour any obligations that it may transpire we have towards the passenger transport authorities. We shall look at the concessions with care.

Hon. Members will want to know at what stage an announcement will be made so that it can be considered. I hope that an announcement will be made on behalf of the Government before consideration begins in another place. On that basis, we can defer the argument and the battle —if there has to be one—about the passenger transport authorities to a later stage. I ask the House to reject the new clause and the amendment, on the narrower point.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 155, Noes 203.

Division No. 182] **[9.37 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian

Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Stokes, John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Schedule 6

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS AND SAVINGS

Amendments made: No. 78, in page 38, leave out lines 17 and 18 and insert

'for the time being fixed in relation to the worker by an order made under section 14 of the 1979 Act or (as the case may be) by a permit granted under section 16(1) of that Act'.

No. 79, in page 39, line 5, at end insert—

'Saving for accrued rights under wages orders

5A.—(1) In the case of any provision contained in an order under section 14 of the 1979 Act and ceasing to have effect (whether wholly or in part) at any time in accordance with section 23 of this Act, the Secretary of State may by order provide, for the purpose of preserving the effect of rights accruing under that provision before that time, for that provision to continue in force as from that time subject to such modifications and transitional provisions as may be specified in the order.

(2) A provision contained in an order under this paragraph may be made with retrospective effect as from the date on which this Act is passed or any later date.

(3) Any order under this paragraph shall be made by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

[Queen's consent and Prince of Wales's consent signified.]

9.49 pm

Mr. Prescott: Of all the Bills that have been brought before the House in the seven years of this Tory Government, this must be the most despicable. By the Government's own admission, it is designed to deregulate and to reduce the wages of people in the lowest paid industries in the country—shops, hotels, restaurants and hairdressing. Previous Tory Governments have felt that there should be laws to prevent exploitation and the development of the sweatshops, which are beginning to emerge.

The Bill dispels any doubt about whether Britain is departing from normal civilised standards. It means that the Government are denouncing international obligations. We will be the only one to do so out of the 94 countries which signed an International Labour Organisation convention recognising that certain trades are poorly organised, poorly paid and liable to exploitation. All the signatory countries agreed to introduce legislation to provide reasonable and fair conditions in those industries but, to our eternal shame, Britain alone has denounced those obligations. It is just another denunciation of international standards. We have done it far more than any other civilised country.

By any criteria, the Bill is mean and despicable. It concentrates all the power of the law against people in the lowest-paid occupations. The Paymaster General knows that we are talking about people who earn £40 or £50 a week. The Bill is designed to drive even those rates further down, as the rejection of our amendments has shown.

The Tories claim to be the party of law and order. They have lectured us all about obeying the law, but there have been very few prosecutions under present legislation for paying miserable wages. The Opposition have proposed amendments which would have strengthened the controls

[Mr. Prescott]

to ensure that agreed rates are enforced, but the Government have rejected those amendments. That is consistent with the 40 per cent. reduction in the number of wages inspectors. Many employers save millions of pounds which they should pay to their employees, by flouting the law.

The Bill is consistent with the Government's approach. They believe that the poor will work harder if they are paid less, but that the wealthy need to be paid more to work harder. It is no wonder that unemployment has increased, as the figures published today show. We are beginning to witness a divided nation. All that rubbish about St. Francis of Assisi when the Prime Minister came into No. 10 should be contrasted with the reality of a divided and bitter nation. The Government are wiping their hands of their responsibilities to provide work and choose to make low pay the solution to our problems.

The Paymaster General paid us a compliment today. The Labour party launched its alternative fair wage strategy yesterday, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that the British people have a sense of fairness and believe that people should have a fair return for their work. They do not want Britain to return to sweat-shop industries and child labour. That is what the Bill is about, however. We are proud to have opposed it. A Labour Government will use the law on behalf of the poor to guarantee them a reasonable standard of living. The House has an obligation to do that, but has flunked it tonight by introducing this pernicious legislation.

9.54 pm

Mr. Holt: The Bill on which we are about to pass judgment will abolish the Truck Acts which have existed since 1831 and have been good law for more than 150 years. When they were introduced some hon. Member probably said, "Hurry up. Get on with it, sit down, and let everyone go home," but they have affected the lives of many people during those years.

I have grave reservations about the legislation, especially those parts which refer to industrial tribunals. As the House will know, I have taken a considerable interest in the workings of industrial tribunals, and have spoken many times on the subject. I do not believe that the addition of the nonsense contained in part II to the burden on industrial tribunals will increase the protection of workers. Indeed, in many ways it is a smoke screen which will reduce some of the present protection.

I am not sure that industrial tribunals want that additional responsibility. Since 1961 and trade levies, whenever the Department of Employment has needed to find a repository for anything, it has found one in industrial tribunals, so that today we have case after case on subjects which I am sure it was never dreamt would come before them. I doubt whether those who passed the legislation which set up industrial tribunals for unfair dismissal thought that the tribunals would try the case of a singing rabbi or of a dismissed football manager, yet those are the realms with which they deal. I am worried that, when we initiate such legislation, we do not know how far it will go.

At this stage, hon. Members who have not listened to our debates in Committee or on the Floor of the House have an opportunity to realise the importance of the vote that we are about to hold. The complete abolition of the Truck Acts was not generally canvassed. Indeed, I suspect that most people thought that the Wages Bill would cover wages councils only, and that many hon. Members would not choose to vote for the other aspects of the Bill. Now they are, perhaps, understanding for the first time what it is they are being asked to vote for—the abolition of payment in cash and in the coin of the realm.

Even at this late hour it is important for me to put that on the record, so that someone in the other place may have the wisdom to consider it and prevail on the Government not to pursue this line of enabling everyone to go to an industrial tribunal on what may well be a minor matter. If an employer deducts £6 a week from an employee when he should be deducting only £5, that employee will have, enshrined in legislation, an opportunity to take the matter to an industrial tribunal. In other words, an employee may go to a tribunal for the sake of £1 a week at a cost of thousands of pounds a day for the tribunal. I do not believe that the Government have thought that matter through.

If an employer and employee are in dispute about sums that have been paid or deducted within the areas covered by the Bill, there must be another mechanism to deal with it which is simple, quick and acceptable to both parties. Industrial tribunals are not acceptable to both parties. Employers' organisations and trade union organisations have criticisms of them.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Do I remember correctly that yesterday you gave a hint, if not a ruling, that those who sought to oppose a ten-minute rule Bill without dividing the House had your displeasure? Does that apply equally to those who seek to speak on Third Reading with no intention of voting against the Bill, as the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) has done for the last three months in Committee?

Mr. Speaker: They are totally different criteria. This is a Third Reading, not a ten-minute rule Bill.

Mr. Holt: The laws of the land are in our hands. People look to us to make good laws. They look to us not to see whether it is time to catch the train home, but to make sure that what we are doing is right. I believe that it is wrong——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Wages Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. — *[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Wages Bill

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Mr. Holt: I do not wish to detain the House much longer—*[Interruption.]* However, I am going to detain the House long enough to make sure that every hon. Member on the Conservative Benches at least knows what he or she is voting for.

I am not sure that everybody has studied in detail the ramifications of what will happen when industrial tribunals are looking into what deductions will be made. I doubt at this stage whether we can manage to read all the documentation that comes to us. We rely on hon. Members who serve in Committee and on experts to help and guide

us. I am not satisfied that that has been done in the case of industrial tribunals. I believe that they are over-legalistic, as I have said repeatedly.

I have had a commitment from the Front Bench that the Government will look into the working of industrial tribunals but, instead of doing that, they are adding to the workings. It is on average 13½ weeks before a worker can take a complaint to a tribunal, which is not satisfactory. I think that——

Ms. Clare Short: Boring.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have just passed the 10 o'clock business motion. The hon. Gentleman has a right to be heard.

Mr. Holt: In the last few days, industrial tribunal decisions have been made by the most learned in the land which have overturned quite important previous decisions. I believe that we are opening up a floodgate of legislation in which so-called protection will be given to workers which will not be acceptable in practical terms.

The Government ought to have considered another method to afford the opportunity of a speedy and proper judgment to those who feel they have been disadvantaged. It will not help to impose a delay of 14 to 15 weeks before cases that have a 10 per cent. ceiling on them can come to court. I cannot believe that those who are responsible for advising the Minister have taken this point on board.

In 1965 the number of books on industrial relations to be found on any lawyer's shelf would total one; today they fill the wall. There will soon be a similar increase in the load on the subject of deductions of money from employees.

No area of the business community has asked for this, yet the Government seek to bring it in. We will make a laughing stock of ourselves if we introduce legislation that provides the opportunity for employees to go to an industrial tribunal for what will be trivial sums of money —£3 to £4. It will lead to industrial tribunals having a greater backlog of work, and the whole system will fall into disrepute. I hope that when the Bill goes to the other place, their lordships will, in their wisdom, find an opportunity not to send all these cases to industrial tribunals.

10.5 pm

Mr. Penhaligon: Few things deserve more genuine admiration than a Member who dedicates himself to trying to make sure that we understand the legislation on which we shall vote. It is odd in this case that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) understands the Bill decides that he does not like it, but still will vote for it. The hon. Gentleman's attitude is astonishing, to say the least.

One of the great privileges given to Ministers of the Crown, Secretaries of State and the Paymaster General is the power to protect the vulnerable. That is one of the most honourable and justifying reasons for our system of Government. Since 1909 one of the vulnerable sections has generally been agreed to be the low paid. Repeatedly since 1909 we have tried to protect them from the worst exploitation by wages councils legislation. The Bill removes the most vulnerable part of the low-paid sector from protection—those under 21.

The Minister has made a number of speeches, and we have had a number of debates, but nobody has yet given me satisfactory reason to believe that the abolition of such protection will achieve the objects for which the Minister has argued. He has identified a problem: there are times when paying an 18-year-old the adult rate militates against that young person's opportunity to obtain employment. That calls for a modification of the law on wages councils, not their abolition. However, the Government have decided on abolition.

Nobody can defend a person aged between 16 and 20 from the most outrageous exploitation. The Under-Secretary has failed by allowing the legislation to be put before the House. Given his record on a number of issues, I am surprised that he has done so, because some of us regard him as nearly civilised, compared to the peculiar company that he keeps. I am amazed by what he has done. This is a bad day, and bad legislation. Many people between the ages of 16 and 20 will regret the day that the Bill was passed. They will remember it, and we shall remind them of it.

Any Parliament other than one dominated by a Conservative Government elected by just 42 per cent. of the electorate will bring back some protection for those people.

10.7 pm

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: If we are to maintain the present growth in the economy and in employment opportunities, we have to continue to work at being a modern labour market. The Bill is a useful package of reforms that takes away various obsolete legal requirements, and will improve employment opportunities for a number of people and young people in particular.

I point out to my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) that the repeal of the Truck Acts of 1831 is a little overdue, and, if it had been done before today, it would have enabled us to move towards more sensible methods of making payments. We have introduced new protection for those who are liable to deductions from pay in the retail trade, and I do not share his fear about the working of the industrial tribunal system.

By ending the rebate system, we shall be taking off the statute book an outdated law. It is no longer necessary to make it cheaper and easier to make people redundant, and public money can be spent on employment measures in more positive ways.

Our aim is to improve employment opportunities. We are not abolishing wages councils. We are retaining protection for adult workers and making the orders more simple. We are taking away the present complex and sometimes unintelligible rigmarole that surrounds the details of wages orders, whereby every aspect of employment for every employee is fixed by a panel of people in terms that are difficult to apply in practice. We shall still enforce it with the inspectorate, although there will be fewer inspectors because fewer workers will be covered, and the orders will be simpler. The method of enforcing the law will be exactly the same as that used by the previous Government, and so will the style of the wages inspectorate. Labour party spokesmen have argued for an approach to this legislation that they never followed when they were in power.

There has been a welcome reduction in the rate of youth unemployment. During the past three or four years, there has been a reduction in the rate of unemployment among young people compared with the adult rate. That has arisen because we have a more sensible understanding of the

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

relationship between the wages earned by young people in their first jobs out of school and the wages earned by more experienced adults.

The wages councils have no contribution to make in that area. Far from exposing youngsters to risk, we are ensuring that their employment opportunities will be increased.

It is the tradition on Third Reading to make short speeches. Usually the Minister says that this is the finest piece of legislation to pass through the House in modern times. Usually the Labour spokesman says that he cannot, in his entire Parliamentary career, remember a worse case of grinding the faces of the poor. In reality, and considering the contents of the Bill, this is a sensible and, and most cases, a much overdue reform of obsolete bits of present employment law, and I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 214, Noes 160.

Division No. 183] **[10.10 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Stokes, John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Francis Maude.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.

Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Ambulance Service (Bromley)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

10.21 pm

Mr. John Hunt (Ravensbourne): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to draw attention to the recent very serious deterioration in Bromley's ambulance service. It is causing great distress and difficulty to many of my constituents. The story that I shall recount to the House is one of muddle and misjudgment by the London ambulance service, which apparently failed to foresee the consequences of its own recent decisions. I was first alerted to the potential problems at the beginning of this year, when a Bromley ambulance man, who is one of my constituents, warned me of the impact of the new rotas that had been agreed between management and the unions.

As a result, I wrote at once to the chairman of the South West Thames regional health authority, which, for reasons not immediately clear to me, administers the whole London ambulance service. At that time, my concern was primarily with emergency cover. In his reply, dated 6 February 1986, the chairman, Mr. Tony Driver, offered me considerable reassurance. He told me, for example, that for some months the authority had been looking into

> "A more efficient use of vehicles which would be more responsive to the pattern of demands."

The letter continued:

> "There will in fact be an overall increase in emergency cover."

Thus, I was reassured. But of course I had been told only half the story. It subsequently transpired that the cuts were being made not in emergency but non-emergency cover —the walking patients as they are sometimes called.

The cuts were in direct contradiction to specific assurances that had been given to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), who has also been actively engaged in these matters, but who is unfortunately overseas on parliamentary business tonight. My hon. Friend received a letter dated 25 February from the chief officer of the London ambulance service, in which he was told that special funding was being provided to meet the situation. As far as I am aware, no such funding has been made available.

It was about that time that I and other of my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in the borough of Bromley began to receive complaints from our constituents about the numerous cancellations and delays within the local ambulance service. I therefore wrote again to Mr. Driver on 22 April expressing some surprise that I had not been forewarned of the reductions, and telling him of their disastrous impact on my constituents.

At about the same time, the district general manager of Bromley health authority, Mr. P. A. Ward, wrote in similar terms to the regional general manager of the South-West Thames RHA. Mr. Ward expressed his serious concern at what he called "the sudden and unplanned" reduction in Bromley's ambulance service. His letter highlighted the draconian cuts that were being imposed.

Apparently, the original demand from the London ambulance service had been for an immediate reduction of 40 per cent. in non-emergency patients. That in itself was bad enough, but by April the position had become immeasurably worse — a demand was made by the divisional ambulance officer for a reduction not of 40 per

[Mr. John Hunt]

cent. but of 70 per cent. in the service for walking patients. That represents a reduction in coverage from 513 patients a week to 163. It was, therefore, hardly surprising that the many patients affected were up in arms and wrote, and are still writing, to me and other Members of Parliament.

I wish to quote one letter from a young lady living in Hayes in my constituency. She said

"I am writing to you about the ambulance cut backs. I am disabled and used to go to Guy's hospital in London by ambulance but I have been told that due to cut backs I cannot have transport any more. The hospital has tried to get me transport and so has my own doctor, but it has been to no avail, so I can't go to the hospital any more. I can't walk very far. I have arthritis in my legs and my hands."

That young girl of 23 is clearly suffering greatly.

In Bromley, ambulance service support has been withdrawn from the Phoenix centre for physically and mentally handicapped children at Farnborough hospital. That centre does magnificent work in providing therapeutic treatment for more than 20 severely handicapped children from all parts of the borough. Surely their parents have enough to cope with without the additional strain of having to make individual travel arrangements for them every day.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware of the immensely successful hospital in Croydon, the Mayday, and the fantastic work that it does. However, is he aware that many consultants at the hospital have approached myself and other hon. Members representing Croydon constituencies because they are concerned about the effectiveness of the London ambulance service? They are worried about the problems with the service in the Croydon area.

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because his intervention emphasises how widespread the problem is. I do not wish in any way to suggest that it is confined only to Bromley; I know that it goes very much wider than that.

Another example in Bromley is the Stepping Stones club, which provides facilities for patients who are recovering from mental and other illnesses. Only this morning I received a letter from the chairman of the Bromley Council for Voluntary Service, His Honour Judge David Griffiths, expressing his concern at the withdrawal of ambulance service support. Part of his letter reads:

"There appears to be severe cuts in ambulance service or community care and yet it appears to be Government policy to increase and encourage this very type of service."

That emphasises a policy contradiction in what is happening.

I have seen a copy of a letter sent by a distinguished ophthalmic surgeon in Bromley to various health authorities and hospitals expressing his great concern at the effect of the cuts on his patients. A section of his letter reads:

"a high proportion of our patients are old and unable to use public transport, and unfortunately many of them have no relatives living locally and appear to have no neighbours who are able to help and hence rely entirely on the ambulance service to attend outpatients."

The letter continues:

"As you will appreciate, these patients include those with long-term conditions, such as glaucoma, which need to be kept under review. There are also post-operative patient and it is essential we see these patients as required at the outpatient clinics. If they cannot attend I can foresee that inevitably there will be disasters with regard to their treatment which could lead to diminution or even loss of their vision which would not be rectifiable."

That is what is happening in Bromley. It is inhuman and intolerable. Faced with this crisis, I am bound to say that I regard the response of the London ambulance service as both casual and complacent. I can only describe the most recent reply that I received from the chairman of the South West Thames regional health authority to my latest letter of protest as quite remarkable. I shall quote two sections of it. He wrote:

"The London Ambulance Service has been faced with an almost impossible task since March as the introduction of the new structure had to be subject to a free vote of all ambulancemen before we, as the managers, would know whether it should be introduced and, following from that, the extent to which ambulancemen would then be willing to undertake over-time if required, could not have been foreseen."

Surely any competent and responsible ambulance authority would never have embarked upon a new structure of working until it had assessed the full impact of the new rotas upon the patients that it is there to serve. Mr. Driver's letter continues:

"When the introduction of the new salaried structure was decided, we and the LAS between us wrote both to Regional and District General Managers throughout London pointing out that in the short-term the imbalance between need and availability could only be matched if the number of patient journeys could be radically reduced. The impact of this on individual patients was a matter which was largely in the hands of the Health Authorities themselves, since they alone can restrict demand."

It seems that that comment begs the question why it was necessary to restrict demand in the first place. I think that that was dodging the issue. A major miscalculation has been made and now Mr. Driver tells me that the London ambulance service is hoping to recruit more men, and perhaps women, to fill the gaps in the present provision.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister three specific questions. First, when will the shortfall be made up? Secondly, is the recruitment of the additional ambulance men subject to any financial restraint or cash limit? Thirdly, when will the 70 per cent. cut in non-emergency provision in Bromley be restored?

I came into politics, as I am sure my hon. Friend did, to improve the lot of those whom I represented. Cuts in ambulance provision of this nature and magnitude, cruelly affecting the most vulnerable sections of the community, make a mockery of all that I have been seeking to do throughout my period in public life. I beg my hon. Friend to act, and to act quickly, to restore the qualities of care and compassion both to the London ambulance service and to our Government.

10.34 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt) for the opportunity to respond to what is clearly an important matter. I was already well aware of the strength of his feeling on the subject, but he has reinforced my impression of his deep concern. I am grateful also for the opportunity to respond to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins). I accept, too, that he is disturbed about what has been happening to the ambulance service for his own constituents.

I must say, at the outset, that we recognise that there have been problems and indeed, in some cases, serious

problems, and improvements must be made. I hope that I shall give my hon. Friends some reason for believing and hoping that those improvements are now in train. Certainly, positive things are happening.

I shall attempt, initially, to set the whole effort in context. These days, we hear far too much about expenditure cuts in the National Health Service. As my hon. Friends the Members for Croydon, North-West and for Ravensbourne recognise, the National Health Service is enjoying a significant increase in resources—a 24 per cent. increase in real terms since 1979.

We recognise that the pressures on the service have increased because of its success. Factors such as the ageing population, our success in making medical advances, and the additional number of nurses and doctors we have recruited all put pressure on the service. The issue also involves the operation of the resource allocation working party, which is known as RAWP.

However, tonight we are talking about the ambulance service. Since the Conservative party came to office it has increased ambulance service expenditure by almost 10 per cent. in real terms. Some of the increase has been shared by the London ambulance service, to which my hon. Friends referred, as it covers Bromley and Croydon.

A new salaried structure for ambulance men and women was introduced recently. The objective of the development was to lead to a more efficient and effective service which was more sensitive to the needs of patients. It was welcomed not only by the management side but by the trade union side of the ambulance Whitley council. There was no intention that the new salaried structure should reduce the level of service provided to the general public as a consequence of the agreement. The purpose of the salaried structure was to replace a pay system which encouraged inefficient working practice.

Both management and the trade unions recognised the importance of reducing overtime to the absolute minimum necessary for operational purposes, and the need to eradicate other working practices which frustrated the establishment of a more cost-effective and efficient ambulance service. The "all-in" salary replaced the former system under which the basic rate of pay was substantially enhanced by additional payments for overtime, shift and weekend working. In many services, but not in the London ambulance services, bonus payments were also made. Now, the basic rate covers all payments for a standard working week worked round the clock and seven days a week as operational needs may require.

The national agreement provided management with the opportunity to review critically, for example, the level of accident and emergency cover to ensure that the level provided matched that indicated by operational need. It provided for rotas to be reviewed and, where necessary, changed, using the criterion that operational necessity is the basis for staff being on duty. The agreement also encouraged the development of extended training in certain life-saving techniques. Out-patient and day centre arrangements were also to be reviewed and altered to provide the optimum vehicle and manpower utilisation. The agreement provides, too, a commitment for working practices to be kept under continuing review and for changes to be made where indicated.

Our constituency experience over the years has shown us there have been serious inefficiencies and waste in the Health Service. I am certain that our basic principle, which was carefully worked out with specialist experts who were brought in to advise, is the right way to go. There is no doubt, however, that there have been problems. The national agreement on salaried status was expected to result in major changes in the organisation and delivery of ambulance services and to lead to an improved service to patients, which is what we seek. There have been teething troubles. Although we are not resigned to that, the problems might be regarded as not particularly surprising. Regrettably, this has been happening in London recently and in other parts of the country.

The London ambulance service management has reviewed its working arrangements and reached local agreement with the staff about the changes necessary to provide the level of service it considered appropriate. It decided that there was a need to divert more resources to the emergency side of the ambulance service. My hon. Friend the Member for Ravensbourne recognised that. I am sure that he agrees that, when difficult decisions have to be taken, the emergency service must take priority.

The changes effected will improve response and activation times and demonstrably provide an improved service which will be of direct benefit to patients. That must be good news. I believe that it will be welcomed by all hon. Members.

This improvement in the emergency service has, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ravensbourne pointed out, had the unfortunate effect of reducing the manpower available to carry out non-emergency duties. We believe that that is a temporary phenomenon. Active steps have been taken to recruit additional staff. Of course, new staff need to be trained to enable them to carry out these important duties. I am pleased to report—I respond to some of the questions put to me by my hon. Friend—that the London ambulance service has been able to recruit 65 new staff who are currently being trained and who will all be available between now and the end of June to carry out operational duties. Further recruitment is taking place and another 32 staff will start training at the beginning of June. The London ambulance service management is encouraged by the response to the recruitment campaign. As an interim measure, the LAS is making use also of the hospital car service, taxis and other hire cars. It has offered district health authorities the loan of ambulances, together with the cash for drivers if suitable people can be recruited locally.

On this issue, it is not a question of money. The Thames regional health authorities have made available additional resources to enable a level of service considered appropriate to be provided. This has taken account of continuing growth in demand for ambulance services, but, of course, this is an aspect in which everyone can help. There is frequently abuse of the ambulance service. I acknowledge that the Health Service has a responsibility to provide the best and most effective service it can. But those responsible for ordering ambulances, and the public have a responsibility to ensure that requests are made only for transport for those patients who meet the medical need criterion. Patients travelling to hospital by public or private transport who receive supplementary benefit or who are on a low income are entitled to reimbursement of their fares.

We regret the inconvenience and distress caused to patients who had their transport cancelled, particularly when they had no time to make alternative arrangements. We believe that the situation should now be improving and that it will continue to do so as the new staff gradually

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

come on stream. Coupled with the real improvement that has already taken place in the quality of the emergency service in London, I am sure that this demonstrates that, within the resources available, our determination remains clear to provide the best ambulance service possible for London and for my hon. Friend's constituents. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend will convey my regret to his constituents about what has happened so far. However, I believe that the outlook with respect to the non-emergency services is improving in the directions I have mentioned. Certainly, the emergency services have improved. I hope that the new arrangement and the new salaried structure will benefit not only ambulancemen but, what at the end of the day is infinitely the most important, the Health Service patients—our constituents.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 16 May 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Social Security Reform

9.35 am

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Brent, South who are profoundly concerned about the changes that are taking place in the socal benefits scheme.

The Brent Association for the Disabled is especially worried, as it appears that legislation passing through the House might disadvantage more than 100 of its members. It is apt that the petition should be presented this morning, because next week the House will consider these matters. Although the legislation will inevitably go through, perhaps some of the anxieties expressed by people throughout the country will be calmed on Report, and perhaps the legislation will help a few of those who will be dispossessed.

The petition sheweth

That the legislation based on the "Reform of Social Security —the Programme for Action" White Paper—

which was the start of the Bill—

will be extremely detrimental to the residents of the United Kingdom who are in receipt of social security benefits. Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House do not pass legislation arising out of the "Reform of Social Security" White Paper. And your petitoners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Inner Cities

9.37 am

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I beg to move,

That this House recognises the need for a partnership between the private and public sectors in the context of urban renewal and in particular for private investment in the inner cities, specifically to widen the choice on behalf of inner city residents to offer them the right to buy and the right to rent, to make the best use of existing urban resources so as to provide the best opportunities for better schools, better job opportunities, to make the best use of existing real estate and personal resources, and to help to conserve the amentities and countryside around the conurbations.

On about the seventh anniversary of my election to the House I had come to the conclusion that I would serve out the rest of my time here without achieving success in the ballot for private Members' Bills or for private Members' motions. However, as at constituency cocktail party raffles in the past, now and again one's number comes up.

I am probably the least numerate Member of the House. I did not manage to pass even O-level mathematics. I cannot remember the size of the majority that I was fortunate enough to secure in Mid-Staffordshire at the previous election, but when balloting for private Members' motions I have always picked the number in the ballot book that represents the majority that I had to beat to become Member of Parliament for Lichfield and Tamworth in 1979. That majority was 331. By a quirk of fate, this was the 13th occasion on which I had balloted in this Parliament for a private Member's motion. I give that advice to my hon. Friends and to Opposition Members should they at some time want their numbers to come up.

These are not just any old numbers—331 and 13, unlucky for some. One might say that, one in three or three in one, the motion refers to a trinity. Let us hope that the solution to the problems of inner cities can be found in some trinity or co-operation between the three major political parties.

It is therefore with some regret that I have to record that one of those political parties, the alliance, is not represented in the Chamber today. There is no representative of the Liberal party and no representative of the Social Democratic party. I find that most extraordinary, because the Liberal spokesman for the environment is the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who represents a borough which probably has some of the worst inner-city problems. I also find it extraordinary that the Liberal Chief Whip is not here, for he represents a constituency in Liverpool, a city which is often represented by a Liberal majority in the city hall. Perhaps we might consider whether the problem that politicians in town halls, county halls or here in Whitehall have inherited in the inner cities is due to the stranglehold—I shall not say ecclesiastical freehold, but certainly fiefhold—of town halls by one major political party.

I have, as is customary in debates such as this, to declare two interests. One is possibly pecuniary, and the other is most certainly honorary. The pecuniary one is that I am a consultant to a firm of chartered surveyors, as, I believe, is well known, and there is just a possibility, although I know not of it, that that firm will from time to time act for companies which have interests in urban renewal and inner-city deprivation. The honorary interest is as a vice-president of the Building Societies Association, which I believe to be a more significant interest, in that it is possible that human life will be revived

[Mr. John Heddle]

in inner cities by a tranfusion from the public sector to the private sector, embodied by the ownership of property by building societies and other similar institutions.

Urban deprivation defies definition. It shares that quality with the elephant, just as it does the quality of being huge and obvious. Urban decay is not just about crumbling out-of-date buildings, old age, poverty, and litter; it is about densities of under-privilege, squalor, concentrations of relatively poor people housed inadequately in areas of declining economic activity, rising unemployment, crime and vandalism. It is not necessarily a matter of physical location, because many inner cities are relatively prosperous.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heddle: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue my speech for a little longer. I shall then be delighted to give way to him. I respect the hon. Gentleman very much, and I know that he nurses his Liverpool constituency with great assiduity.

The inner-city problem is about concentrations of social deprivation and economic decline. It is not so much about no-go areas as about no-hope areas. Last Saturday, while queueing for admission to Wembley stadium, my 10-year-old son and I were attacked and robbed of our tickets. What happened in broad daylight in the midst of the madding crowd happens every day and every night in the graffiti-ridden liftshafts of hard-to-let council flats and in the dark, dank alleyways that meander through the inner cities. Unlike what happened last Saturday, the innocent who are robbed of their handbags, shopping baskets or wallets go unreported in the press and unreported to the police. Such things are part of every-day inner-city life, but they should not be.

Why do such incidents not occur in the leafy suburbs or the neo-Georgian estates on the fringes of our prosperous towns? It is surely that people there are better behaved, and partly because they are better housed and therefore the more content with their lives.

Mr. Parry: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on raising this important subject. Does he agree that many of the problems arising from the serious decline of our inner cities have come about because of Government policy? I refer to unemployment, rate capping and large cuts in rate support grant.

Mr. Heddle: I do not regret having given way to the hon. Gentleman, because he has revealed the one-sided and blinkered attitude from which I had hoped the debate would get away. He concentrated on the largesse of the Government and the ability of the Treasury or Whitehall to provide the solution to the nation's problems. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will be prepared to admit today that the solution to the inner-city problem as embodied in my motion lies in partnership between the public and private sectors. There should be a certain amount of financial pump-priming from the taxpayer, and a certain amount of initiative and enterprise from the private sector.

Is the answer to the inner-city problem as simple as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) suggested? Is more cash from the public purse the answer? Is the answer to build more council houses? Has homelessness in Liverpool decreased, while the hon. Gentleman has served his constituents, by building more council houses? The answer is no. Homelessness has continued to increase, partly because the existing housing stock, public and private, has not been used to the best advantage of the community.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that during the past five years or so there has been an unprecedented increase in homelessness to levels that we have never before experienced, and that for the first time since the war there has been a reduction in the public sector housing stock? Is he aware that those two phenomena have gone hand in hand?

Mr. Heddle: I listened to the hon. Gentleman's maiden speech some weeks ago with considerable interest and found some of it contradictory. Despite his few weeks in the House, he has already acquired what so many hon. Members have—the disease of selective amnesia. As he was a prominent activist in the voluntary housing movement, he will know that the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 has done as much to increase homelessness as anything else. I shall come to that and to bed-and-breakfast accommodation later.

The problems of inner cities reflect acutely the difficulties that the Government have identified in their national strategy as being behind Britain's long-term problems—excessive or misdirected central and local government spending, the intrusion of controls into inappropriate areas and the stifling of enterprise. The inner cities present the best possible example of those problems in action and of the dereliction of industry and unemployment that they have helped to create.

The advice that the Government receive from the Opposition parties boils down to a bid for a greater share of public expenditure, an increased burden on the taxpayer or the ratepayer, or all three. Bids and proposals must be judged according to whether they repeat the mistakes of the past, whether they encourage initiative and discourage dependency and whether they encourage good targeting and value for money. Those are the key issues.

Is it not the case that were it not for the riots in 1980 and 1985 the inner cities would have featured far less on the agenda of the House than they do? All political parties, of whatever persuasion and hue, must bear some responsibility for the fact that for generations they have ignored the decline that has taken place behind the corrugated and nettle-ridden boundary fences of vacant land and in buildings which are rated but are unused because they have outlived their usefulness. All political parties have a responsibility for the inheritance that is ours today.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friends the Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), for Bridgwater (Mr. King) and for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) for the initiative that they and their ministerial teams have taken in trying to provide solutions to problems which have been conveniently ignored by all political parties for so long.

It would be wrong to relate inner-city decline simply to state intervention. However, it is clear that fundamental and expensive mistakes have been made in tackling urban problems. The initiatives on basic needs and attacks on abuses have all too often mushroomed into an overblown machinery which sought to plan, take responsibility for,

rehabilitate and regulate everything. All too often the basic dynamic of wealth creation has been taken for granted, resulting in the failure that we see today.

The lessons from the past suggest the following strategy. Assistance should be targeted on the most needy areas, where results can be seen, so that help is not spread too thinly and incoherently. We should require the state, especially local authorities, to minimise regulations and to be responsive and positive to investors and consumers. We should build up business confidence by tackling dereliction, and by pump-priming investment in infrastructure. That is most important, because the private sector will not invest shareholders' capital or risk its capital or profits in the inner cities unless the Government are prepared to provide the infrastructure. That is part of the formula of the partnership to which I referred earlier. We should provide direct help to businesses, to encourage badly needed investment, such as is happening in docklands and the Albert dock in the constituency of the hon. Member for Riverside. That is a fine example of partnership between the public and private sectors, revitalising, refurbishing and renewing life in his part of that sadly neglected city.

It is self-evident that many Departments must be involved in that task. One of the problems of the past is, perhaps, that there has not been an umbrella authority or Department which can take an overview of all the components that make up inner-city deprivation. The Home Office deals with issues such as law and order and race discrimination, the Department of Employment deals with employment and training, the Department of Education and Science deals with education, and the Department of Health and Social Security deals with social services. All those matters are as important as bad housing and a lack of business opportunities. No one Department has ever been able to pull all those various components together. That is why the initiative taken to try out employment-based projects in eight selected small inner-city areas is so important. It is another example of the Government's willingness and open-mindedness to test projects to ensure that public money is properly spent and that all opportunities to secure inner-city regeneration are properly explored.

Local labour markets should work efficiently. That means encouraging young people in the inner cities to make the most of their training opportunities, and making them realise that, although those opportunities may not be as profitable in terms of pocket money as unemployment benefit, they should take the advantage of learning a skill which will stand them in good stead for a job later on. It means encouraging realistic wage expectations and improving the information and recruitment systems which match people to jobs in a way which gives everybody a fair chance.

Job prospects in the inner cities will not depend wholly on those labour supply measures alone. We must improve the physical fabric in order to encourage private investment which generates jobs. At the end of my speech I shall make some constructive suggestions which my right hon. and hon. Friends in their Departments have not yet taken on board in as encouraging a manner as I would hope. We must ensure that land in the inner cities is open to developers. Above all, we must do something about the social mix in the cities. There must be home ownership beside rented property, and large factories beside small seed corn nursery industrial units. We cannot afford the one-tenure municipal ghettos for residential, commercial or industrial purposes which tie people in their choice of housing and job, lock them into immobility, and give them no opportunity to change their job, either from one part of the city to another, or from one part of the country to another.

I am looking forward to the reply of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. She had a long and distinguished record in local government before coming to the House, and, like many hon. Members, she can see the problem from both sides — from the town hall and from Whitehall. The Department of the Environment is most concerned about the development of urban policy, fully recognising that many Departments' programmes are necessarily involved, and it is to that that my hon. Friend lends her experience.

Too often, the arguments about how much money should be given to local authorities are given publicity. The hon. Member for Riverside referred to that earlier. I do not want to go into that today, but I wish to emphasise that that debate obscures the range of policies and policy instruments which are being used to regenerate our inner cities. Perhaps I could remind the House of some of them.

Those policies include selective and targeted support, both through the urban programme and through many local authorities' programmes. My hon. Friend the Minister will probably tell the House of the enormous sums that have been invested in those schemes, but we must ask whether that money has been properly invested on behalf of taxpayers to produce the best benefit for the people who live in those areas. There is the policy to mobilise the inner-city land market and to tackle dereliction through the land registers and the dereliction land programme, enlisting the support of the private sector through urban development grants and the new urban regeneration grant. There is the policy to improve inner-city housing by widening choice and encouraging both owner-occupation and a more responsive and efficient service to tenants.

There are 188,000 acres of derelict land waiting for the developer's digger and the builder's shovel to lay foundations for homes and factories to buy and to rent. The procedure to identify that land is too cumbersome, because the information is locked in a register which is put on display at the behest of the local authority which owns the land and which, by and large, does not wish to sell it. I am not making a party political point, as local authorities controlled by all political parties have been guilty of that discouraging inertia. Local authorities like to acquire land, but do not wish to dispose of it.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): The House is listening with great interest to a fascinating exposition of inner-city problems. My hon. Friend mentioned local authorities as being one of the culprits of land hoarding. Does he agree that it is not just local authorities, but many of the public institutions, such as the water authorities and British Rail, which continue with this hoarding? Does the Government's register not show that the number of acres of derelict, vacant and dormant land in public hands is increasing, and that something much more dramatic needs to be done to allow that land to come into use, rather than permit green field site developments on the outside? As long as the inner city is left empty, with vacant dormant land in public ownership, the developers will wish to develop on the green field sites outside.

Mr. Heddle: My hon. Friend has made a valid and telling point. He had the experience, in a previous Parliament, of representing an inner city seat in Liverpool. The principal culprit of land hoarding is local authorities and certain statutory undertakings, possibly the DHSS. However, now that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Services has appointed Mr. Victor Paige as chairman of the National Health Service management board, that has injected an attitude of greater urgency into the management of properties owned by the Department and the regional health authorities.

My hon. Friend then spoke about the water authorities, and they have been guilty of holding much too much land. He also mentioned British Rail, and here I pay tribute to the managing director of the British Rail property board, Mr. Gavin Simpson, whom I have the pleasure of knowing, and who has embarked on a constructive and progressive policy towards the disposal of surplus sidings and other land which British Rail has hoarded for years to store coal, but which has not been used since the advent of the electric train. I agree with what my hon. Friend said.

My hon. Friend then referred to the maximisation of inner-city land as being the one way to relieve pressure on the green belt. We could spend many hours debating this point. I pay tribute to the House Builders Federation, to the Building Employers Confederation and the British Property Federation, which, more recently than some of us might have hoped, have taken on board the fact that the only way to satisfy builders' land requirements is for them to turn their attention from Bracknell to Beckton, from the leafy suburbs of the M4 corridor back to the inner cities.

The one way to revitalise the inner cities is to encourage people to want to live there. I suspect that the majority of people now buying property in docklands had hoped, when they left school or university, that they would spend the majority of their family lives living in the suburbs or the country. Because of the initiative that we can see at docklands, again a partnership between the public and the private sectors, that rundown place, an area which we have all neglected for the past 20 years—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) wishes to intervene, he is welcome to do so. He represents a constituency not far from docklands. Perhaps he could give the House the benefit of his views, rather than whispering to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford).

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I did not intervene immediately because I had only just walked in to the Chamber—I apologise to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) and to other hon. Members. I thought that it would be impertinent of me immediately to intervene, but as the hon. Member has invited me to do so, I shall take the opportunity.

The prices of houses being built in the south part of my borough of Newham, in the London Docklands Development Corporation area, are beyond the financial range of the vast majority of the ordinary people of Newham. That problem must be faced. It is all very well to talk of houses at £50,000 or £60,000, but the people of Newham cannot afford them.

Mr. Heddle: The hon. Gentleman has made a valid point and one to which the Government must devote their mind. The hon. Gentleman has experience of east London, at both local and central Government levels, and he can make some constructive suggestions. It is a problem for all political parties which seek to revitalise areas, whether inner city or otherwise, that those areas will become more attractive to the upwardly mobile, which will inevitably price out the people who we wish to house first and foremost—the young, the disadvantaged and those on low incomes. This challenge confronts us all, and the answer does not lie simply in public sector housing. If it did, docklands would not have been what it was before it was revitalised. It does not lie solely in the free market, because that would produce, as the hon. Gentleman says, the price escalation that we have seen in docklands.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Is not the massive escalation in house and land prices also pricing out housing associations and other third-sector agencies which would wish to develop the sort of partnership which the hon. Gentleman is suggesting, and which I support? Given the urgency of the task and the speed with which things are developing, the only way to control the otherwise excessive increases in land prices in the development areas is to intervene to hold down those prices, so that there can be an opportunity for housing associations, or even low-cost private housing, and for local authorities to regenerate the area for the local community. Is this not the priority for the people who live in the most deprived areas of London and Liverpool?

Mr. Heddle: I cannot entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. At the beginning of my speech I referred to the fact that the hon. Gentleman was not in his place. I am delighted that he is now with us. He may have come in late because of the traffic holding him up on the M25 as he decided to skirt round his constituency. It may be because he picked up the speech to which the House will no doubt enjoy listening later from his research assistant. I do not know, but the House always listens with great interest to the hon. Gentleman's contributions. However, I do not agree with him, because while the housing associations may wish to develop in docklands, they could buy the accommodation elsewhere. Those whom the housing associations wish to satisfy would be prepared to live elsewhere in the inner cities, in areas where land is at giveaway, knockdown, auction prices.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Rubbish.

Mr. Heddle: It is not rubbish. There are about 180,000 acres of inner city land of which the value is negligible because nobody in the private sector wants to buy it because they cannot afford to put in the infrastructure. The only way to get that land developed is by giving derelict land grants.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I hate to break up this cosy view of the term "inner cities" being applied only to London. If the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) is talking about inner cities rather than about one inner city, he should realise that the problem of tremendous pressure for development in the city does not exist in the Manchesters, the Liverpools or most of the northern cities. There is no pressure there from the leafy suburbs for land. We should be delighted to have that problem.

Mr. Heddle: The hon. Gentleman states only half the case. The pressure may not be from the leafy suburbs or the green belt land, but—he ignores this at his political peril — it is there from those on the council house

waiting lists who go to his advice bureau every Friday and Saturday, as they come to mine, to demand the right to a home. The problem there is not the right to buy, but the right to rent.

Investing in the inner cities is not like investing down the M4 corridor, as the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) reminded us. The risks are greater and the returns more uncertain, and therein lies the challenge to the Government—to try to find an incentive to bring private capital back to the inner cities.

Without doubt, the right to buy has been a considerable success, as has been acknowledged across the Chamber. It has been such a success that the Opposition will go into the next election—no doubt reluctantly—unprepared to oppose such legislation. I should like the alliance parties, which are in power in so many town halls at the moment, instead of obstructing the legal process positively to encourage tenants to buy their houses.

When I served on the Standing Committee of the Housing Bill in 1980, I was delighted to learn that the Opposition were prepared to give a fair wind to the assured tenancy arrangements. They knew, as I knew, that assured tenancies would not produce very many houses, because there is no correlation between cost and economic rent. The hon. Member for Fulham nods in a north-south direction. He agrees with me. Therefore, I ask him also to agree with me that if the assured tenancy provisions are, in principle, acceptable to his party, the shorthold provisions of the Housing Act 1980 should also be acceptable to his party.

The assured tenancy provisions were designed to provide new homes for rent by people who want to rent their homes. The shorthold tenancy provisions were also designed to provide new and/or secondhand homes for people who want to rent their homes. It is not for the Opposition to say that people should live in new houses or in secondhand houses. It is up to Opposition Members to try to find practical solutions to these problems.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that both the assured tenancy and the shorthold tenancy experiments have proved to be completely irrelevant? The problem, as the hon. Gentleman recognises—and that is why I was nodding—is that the economics of trying to provide rented housing which will give a return to the landlord and be within the reach of ordinary people on low incomes who are looking for rented housing are impossible. There is a gross mismatch. That applies whether one is referring to short tenancies or to any other form of tenancy where rent control does not apply. Where rent control applies, the tenant may be able to afford the accommodation, but the landlord will not find that it is an attractive proposition. Again that highlights the mismatch.

Our objection to the shorthold scheme is that when the Government introduced it they gave pledges about rent control, but then they promptly tried to remove rent security from tenants so that landlords could charge what they want. It is a grossly misconceived scheme. It is irrelevant to housing needs, it is a sad comment on the Government's pledge to revive the private market and it has been wholly illusory and unsuccessful.

Mr. Heddle: I regret having given way for a second time this morning to the hon Gentleman, and I shall not give way to him again. I shall read his speech with interest during the early part of next week, if I can find the time. He has blurred the edges between rent control and security of tenure. They are two separate and distinct issues. He has also allowed himself the privilege of putting himself into the minds of homeless persons. He should not come to the House and presume to know whether somebody would like the right to rent for one, two, three, four or five years.

It is not for the Opposition to say, as they said during the Committee stage of the Housing Bill, that if they are returned to power they will repeal the shorthold provisions. The public perception of that promise is that if the Opposition are returned to power people will find that they are homeless, or landlords will find that they have unsatisfactory tenants and that it is difficult to evict them. The debate continues about the right to rent. The Opposition have travelled down the road to Damascus over the question of the right to buy. I hope the time will come when they travel down the same road over the right to rent.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heddle: No, I shall not give way again. I have already given way on several occasions and I must finish my speech.

Today there are 1 million people who want the right to a key to their own front door. There are a considerable number of empty houses, many of which, although by no means all, are owned by local authorities. Some of the local authority-owned houses have been empty for six, nine, 12, or more months. Today 26,000 houses that are under stewardship of local authorities have been standing empty for more than 12 months. That is a scandal and a scar on the face of a so-called caring society. If one looks above the fascia boards of shop fronts in towns and cities throughout the country, one sees empty rooms. *[Interruption.]* Local authorities will not let these rooms, for the very reason that the hon. Member for Fulham mentioned. *[Interruption.]* He is as much responsible for homelessness and for the misery that homelessness causes as anybody else. His partial, irresponsible, sedentary remarks will not, I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, be recorded in *Hansard*.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heddle: I suggest that any local authority house that stands empty for more than six months, on the excuse that the local authority is waiting to carry out repairs or that it does not have enough money with which to carry out the repairs, should be made available on a rent-free basis to a do-it-yourself expert on the local authority's housing waiting list. Hundreds of my constituents who come to my advice bureau or who write to me would like to have the key to a house that needs gentrification and to be able to do that work out of their own resources in return for a generous rent-free period. It would help them to secure a home. It would also help local authorities. They would not have to look after empty houses that are an open invitation to vandals. Furthermore, the local authorities would not have to provide the money to rehabilitate those houses.

The way in which to regenerate the inner cities is to provide a partnership between the public and the private sector in the business context, the way forward must be to encourage the great corporations of this country and abroad to put more than the 0·1 per cent. of their pre-tax profits into inner city regeneration. If that can happen at Baltimore in the United States, it can happen in the United

[Mr. Heddle]

Kingdom. It could happen through the provision of tax exempt bonds, a matter which I should like to discuss further with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and his team.

For those who are prepared to provide job opportunities in the inner cities by starting up their own small, seed corn factories, but who do not have the track record to be able to obtain premises with which to do so, I should like a covenant guarantee to be introduced under which either the Government or the local authorities would be prepared to pay or guarantee the rent for a period. That would enable people to start up in business and ultimately play their part in providing job opportunities.

I should like local authorities to pass their hard-to-let estates to the private sector and to building societies and other financial institutions, and, instead of being responsible for the cost of management and maintenance, to guarantee the rent. They would then not have to worry about maintenance and capital costs. All that they would have to do would be to guarantee any shortfall. Local authorities have to fund that shortfall anyway, because of their stewardship of our housing stock. Today the nation's rent debt bill stands at £200 million. If local authorities were to guarantee the rent to another landlord instead of having the responsibility for management and maintenance costs, that figure would not be as horrendously high as it is today.

I should like the umbrella concept to be introduced so that Whitehall Departments do not have to vie with each other to find solutions to our horrendous inner city problems. I should like a national urban task force to be established, along the lines of the Scottish Development Agency, which seems to work very well. That agency would be not Government-led, but would be business-led. The players in that development agency would be orchestrated by enterprise and incentive.

Mr. Parry: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heddle: No, I am reaching the end of my speech. I ask the hon. Gentleman to be patient, because I am sure that he will seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a moment.

The players would be orchestrated in that development agency by enterprise and incentive. The principal players would be the Department of the Environment, builders, developers, institutions, industry and the building societies.

I submit that those are the ways in which to reverse the failures in our cities. That is the way in which to provide jobs and decent housing for the residents of our cities. We must break the cycle of dependency and challenge the assumption which too often underlies the approach of some local authorities—the production of a high cost and sophisticated municipal welfare system which too often benefits the provider of the system rather than the consumer. That is the way forward.

I urge my hon. Friend to continue to seek effective ways of partnership to provide a way out of the present difficulties and certainly not ways which reinforce them. The role of the private sector will be central to that process and will be of growing and not diminishing importance. If our cities are once again to be human, safer, prosperous and the pride of our nation, I commend to the House some of the suggestions which my motion embodies.

10.20 am

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I am sure that hon. Members have listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle). We congratulate him on tabling the motion, which gives us the opportunity to develop some of the comments that he has made. Equally, it enables us to comment in depth on some of the issues that he did not touch upon. Those of us who come from the inner cities know at first hand the problmes that exist and a debate such as this is our opportunity to highlight them in the House.

On some things I am in agreement with the hon. Gentleman but on other matters we have very little in common. I think that all hon. Members would accept that in all areas of government, be it local or national, we must try to obtain the best services for the money that is being spent. No one would disagree with that. However, those of us who come from the inner cities see another side to the problem and the hon. Gentleman has not touched on that in any great detail.

The comments that many hon. Members will make today were vividly reported in the recent Church of England report "Faith in the City". It clearly outlined the kind of day-to-day issues that people who live in our inner cities, not just London, have to live with.

I want to comment on some of the issues which affect my constituency in London and which affect many hon. Members who represent London, irrespective of the side of the Chamber on which they sit. The first issue is, undoubtedly, employment. Government policy on employment in the inner cities has completely failed. One can see from any opinion poll that the great concern that people have is trying to find employment. In my post today have come the latest figures in the Manpower Services Commission report, "Unemployment and unfilled vacancies in Wandsworth", dated April 1986. One assumes that they are up-to-date figures. In the borough for which I am one of the Members, there are, according to this report, over 16,000 people registered as unemployed and there are 700 vacancies.

If one talks to youngsters in our schools about how they see their future, their reply is one of despair because, sadly, they see no meaningful employment available to them in the area. That is not a recent development; it has been going on for many years.

Another issue of great importance to us in the inner cities is that the Government have no policy which will give any meaningful hope to men and women in the 50-year-old age group who may have worked for most of their lives but who suddenly find themselves unemployed, for whatever reason. I accept that that is a problem throughout the country. Such people expected to work until they were 60 or 65. I have asked many questions on this issue because week by week people within that age group come to see me and write me letters asking what advice I can give them. The problem is of crucial importance but the Government have no policy on that.

In the inner cities where, until a few years ago, we had flourishing industries we now see many sites being sold off to private developers. Comments have already been made about the docklands development. Those private developers are developing houses which certainly do not meet the needs of those living in the area. They are for people coming into the area with money.

The hon. Gentleman said that local authorities cannot be solely responsible for providing housing. I accept that we must have a broad housing base for people, be it private or local authority development. I am sure that this week all of us have received the annual report of the National Federation of Housing Associations. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman reads that. In it the federation is saying how difficult its task has become because of Government policy. Yet we all know that if we do not want just local authority housing it is to housing associations that we must look.

For many years I was associated with a housing association called Threshold, which operates in parts of London. It has a superb record, but it recently told me of the enormous problems that it has trying to help people with genuine housing needs. For a variety of reasons the local authorities will not be helping it and in no way will it be able to go down to the docklands and buy property that is being constructed there. I share with the hon. Gentleman the belief that I understood him to express that we must seek to achieve good housing policy for everyone.

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the point that he is making about industrial land being taken up by housing development applies as much to municipal housing development as to private housing development and there is a great need in the inner cities to see that as far as possible land is retained for employment purposes?

Mr. Cox: I accept that. However, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman accepts that many of us who represent the inner city areas, where there have been the old, traditional, employments, often receive complaints from people about the environmental effects of such employment. Therefore, we must start to develop modern constructive employment opportunities within a housing development area. Sadly, that is something that we have not seen for many years. We are not seeing that under this Government in parts of London and, to be frank, we did not see as much as we should have seen under the previous Labour Government. However, I take the hon. Gentleman's point that that is something that we need to develop.

When the hon. Gentleman for Mid-Staffordshire talks about local authority housing it is true that there are some deplorable estates. We do not dispute that. But many of the problems on those estates can be traced back to Government finance restrictions. There is no doubt about that.

This is an ideal opportunity to get away from solely political points and quote organisations which, because of the nature of their involvement, hold views and expertise that some of us do not have to the same extent. I have here a report published by the Royal Institute of British Architects last summer along with a report called "Decaying Britain." It says:

> "Many authorities commented that inadequate housing investment programme allocations were placing a great and increasing strain on resources, reducing capitalised repair work and leading to reduced expenditure on environmental improvements."

There are problems throughout housing and the Government cannot contract out of their responsibilities.

The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire has suggested that big business could be brought into the city areas and encouraged to develop. That sounds attractive, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has said, not many of those on council waiting lists will live in the sort of development that will take place by big business. The hon. Gentleman's proposition will not lead to the broad balance that is crucial in the areas that my hon. Friends and I represent.

Mr. Heddle: The hon. Gentleman has missed the point slightly. I was trying to say that increased expenditure by government, whether central or local, has not produced the solution. Indeed, it has created the conditions that we are talking about. I am saying that it is time that we lifted our sights beyond bureaucracy and the public community chest to find the solution elsewhere. I have instanced Baltimore in the United States, where big business has produced the money to provide jobs and prosperity for the inner cities. If the United States can do it, Great Britain can do it. It is incumbent upon Opposition Members to make constructive suggestions as to how the partnership can be developed.

As for the prices of property in docklands——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Heddle: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am answering the point that the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox)——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not use an intervention to make a second speech.

Mr. Cox: We do not see that the sort of partnership that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting will meet the needs of the constituents whom we try to represent in the areas from which we come, which are basically inner cities. The motion appears to be attractive, but if the nuts and bolts were brought together and the motion were implemented it would not bring a great deal of hope to the areas that we represent.

I shall restrict the remaining part of my speech to hospital services. Employment, housing, education and hospital services are crucial if we are to have the communities that we want in our inner city areas. It is interesting that this week we have heard concern expressed by a respected London Conservative Member about the Government's policy vis-a-vis financial allocations under RAWP to hospitals in London. If we are to restore confidence in our communities, the hospital and social services that are available to our constituents, irrespective of their professions and occupations, are crucial. However the figures are dressed up by Ministers, we are seeing a reduction in hospital and social services in our communities.

In Wandsworth we are engaged in yet another confrontation with the local health authority and the Government as we wish to keep open a major hospital. Sadly, St. James's hospital, Balham, is threatened with closure. The health authority is saying, "It does not matter because when the hospital is closed we shall have at St. George's hospital, Tooting, all the facilities that we want." That sounds attractive, but no one believes it. It is clear that the general public do not believe the health authority. That is demonstrated by the letters that they write and attendances at public meetings. I beg Ministers to start to listen to what people are saying about the rundown of hospital services that is taking place in Wandsworth and elsewhere. This issue has been taken up by the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), and my

[Mr. Cox]

hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has cited the hospital closures and the rundown of services in his area. It is something that the people of London will not continue to accept.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that there are 12 teaching hospitals in London and 18 in the rest of England and Wales. I am sure that he is aware also that constituencies such as mine have been grossly underfunded for many years. We are spending about £3 million a year buying services from London which should be provided in my constituency.

Mr. Cox: I have the greatest sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's comments about a lack of services in his area and for the constituents he represents, but that is the responsibility of Government. If the hon. Gentleman and his constituents do not have the sort of services that they would like, we from the inner cities do not think that we should see a rundown of our services so that better services can be provided for Mid-Kent. I could run through the list of hospital closures that have taken place in many parts of London, but that would take too long and would be unfair on those who wish to participate in the debate. The fact is that RAWP, as it is applied to London, is entirely unfair.

The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire talks about the broad balance that he wants to see in our communites. Unless we have proper funding from tihe Government and proper hospital services for our people, be they professionals, or skilled, or unskilled workers, we shall never get the broad-based communities developing that many of us would like to see. I beg Ministers to pay heed to this argument. The constituency of the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), adjoins mine and many of her constituents must make use of the hospital services that are provided in the area which I represent, where hospitals are now under threat of closure. I cannot believe that she has not received letters of complaint. It is possible that she has not received as many letters as I have because St. James's hospital is in my constituency, but she cannot be unaware how crucial the issue has become to the people of London.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me that a telling statistic—the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) must be aware of it—is that in the past few years the sum spent on health services in Britain has placed us at the bottom of the league table of all western European countries, where previously Britain was one of the highest spenders. Unless the Government deal with this problem, needs in rural areas such as Mid-Kent and in urban areas such as those that the hon. Gentleman and I represent will not be met, and the services will become worse.

Mr. Cox: The hon. Gentleman has made an extremely valid point and I do not need to comment on it.

I welcome the debate and I am sure that many of my hon. Friends will wish to contribute to it. They may take a line similar to mine or they may take up entirely different issues. We welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate but we want to see some changes taking place. If anyone was saying exactly that, by golly, it was the electors who voted last week, right across the country—

Mr. Heddle: In Wandsworth?

Mr. Cox: Yes, even in Wandsworth—although we did not win the council, we certainly won council seats.

We are now hearing a great deal of talk that the Government are doing everything right, and it is only the presentation of their policies that is wrong. Those people are living in dreamland. No matter who presents the policies—be it the Prime Minister or the chairman of the Conservative party—until the Government change their policies on the sort of issues we are discussing today, there will be a continuing loss of support that will end in defeat for them at the next election.

10.40 am

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) down his last road—although I have often had the pleasure of following him in debates. I say pleasure because, as the country knows, the Labour party has no policies. It is no good Labour simply attacking the Government if it cannot present alternative policies—other than £24 billion of higher spending, crushing everyone's income and imposing VAT rates of up to 41 per cent. on goods, thereby putting them out of the reach of pensioners and others. However, I shall not spend time on that particular point because the hon. Gentleman made many points with which I agreed—as he often does.

I spent 12 years teaching in Kings Cross, and one cannot be more inner city than that. I have watched the gradual elimination of open spaces and private housing to the stage where, in some areas, there is almost 100 per cent. public sector housing. For example, Tower Hamlets had several beautiful open spaces at the turn of the century, but under 50 or 60 years of Socialist councils—a reign that ended recently—those open spaces have been turned into concrete and housing. I am not suggesting that people should not have homes, but the planning has not been comprehensive. It has not taken account of the need for people to have room to breathe, room to move about, room for trees and grass to grow and room for children to play. There has been an obsession with building public sector housing and squeezing out almost all owner-occupied houses.

The result has been a rigid bureaucracy that has imprisoned people in their homes. I lived in east London, taught there and fought elections there, and I came to know the area well. Believe it or not, some people have been on the housing waiting list for 30, 40 or 50 years. Indeed, that state of affairs is not restricted to east London—it happens in urban and rural areas also. During my time in east London I found example after example of couples whose families had grown and left home retaining occupation of their three or four-bedroomed flats or houses. They wanted to move into smaller accommodation but found that virtually impossible because the bureaucracy did not operate sensibly. Sometimes people may be successful in moving from a house into a one-bedroom flat, but all too often they find that impossible.

I know of a current case of a couple with six young children under seven years of age who are stuck in one bedroom. They want to swap homes with a retired couple who want to move out of their larger property. Unfortunately, they are finding that swap impossible because in large public sector housing areas such a rigid bureaucracy has become established—and computers

have not helped — that sensible exchanges cannot happen. That is a tragedy and something must be done about it.

The Rent Acts have provided protection for people already in the private sector, but others wanting to rent accommodation have no protection. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) made that point in his admirable speech. My experience in both inner London and urban areas is that, frequently, people in rent-controlled accommodation pay low rents even though they have good, well paid and well established jobs and money in the bank. Yet students and young married couples seeking temporary homes cannot find rented accommodation without paying very high rents. It is absurd and wrong for people with good jobs and money in the bank to pay controlled low rents when others with nothing have to pay high rents. There is something seriously wrong and we need to work hard to change the system and achieve equity for all.

During my 23 years as a teacher there was a gradual but strong move towards comprehensive schools. Indeed, I spent 20 years teaching in them and I enjoyed every minute. The profound and important argument put forward by those advocating the principle of comprehensive schooling was that it brought together children of all abilities and all social backgrounds, all of whom could be given equal opportunities. What could be better than that? However, there have been problems with the implementation of the comprehensive system — some comprehensives are excellent, but others are not.

The principles behind the concept of comprehensive education were attractive to me and, for ideological reasons, I was drawn into the system. As I have already said, I enjoyed every minute. The argument that most attracted me was that the system brought together people from various backgrounds — different family backgrounds, different income groups and different levels of intelligence—and the mix would contribute to the lives of everyone. Often, although not always, that has worked very well.

Why that same principle has not been applied by local authorities to housing, I shall never understand. Many local authorities, specially in urban areas, have been content to stick people from one background in one area, and only in council housing. They would not tolerate an infusion of private housing into vast council estates. It has only been the right to buy that has begun to reverse that. That is the great value of the right to buy—at last there are comprehensive housing estates. Progress is slow, but at least there are now some estates with people in private and council accommodation living cheek by jowl. That creates a better social mix, better care of an area and better attention to community life. That should be our aim.

The principle of comprehensive housing estates is essential to the future of all housing areas. I am sure that the Government will bear it constantly in mind. I hope that any alternative Government will see the sheer folly of putting only one type of person in one community. That is to the detriment of that community.

Concrete jungles, such as Tower Hamlets, have been a disservice to the people who live in them, for the reasons I have given, but also because they have not allowed mobility between homes and because they have squeezed industry out, resulting in scarcer jobs. One need only look at east London to see the effects of that principle, milking industries dry for rates and keeping rents low. This has damaged such areas. It is no good simply having homes where there are no jobs, and I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to bear that in mind.

Tenants in inner-urban areas face the problem of getting repairs done. A debate of this kind cannot ignore that factor. I can cite many examples of Labour authority areas and areas under authorities of other complexions where people cannot get repairs done in anything like the time required. Why are people required to ring the town hall to get a window repaired? Why can we not have an extension of the principle which Conservative Members have enunciated many times and let people either repair the window themselves or call in someone to do it and then put in the bill?

As for home decoration, which is so important to morale, why cannot people get their homes decorated to a reasonable standard or do the job themselves and then put in the bill? That would be much better than waiting for the council to do it. That principle is not operated sufficiently widely in urban areas. The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) is shaking his head. I could take him to parts of the country where such a principle is urgently needed. Improvements such as I have described would end the nightmare for many.

Home improvements have abounded under the Government and it is greatly to their credit that more is now spent on that aspect than ever before. It is enormously worth while. Most home improvement schemes work well, but they are expensive. However, some do not work as well and tenants have to endure workmen around them pulling down walls and adding to buildings. Surely we could have a scheme in which such people were moved out for the duration of the improvement and were not moved back until the work was done. Of course, there is a danger that there will be less pressure to get the work done, but that would be better for people than being faced with workmen coming in and out of their homes. Often there is friction between the workmen's needs and those of householders.

As a prospective candidate for an east London seat, I saw a home improvement scheme undertaken by a Labour authority.

Mr. Tony Banks: Here we go.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman is chiacking from a sedentary position. I must warn him that it will not get into *Hansard*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Speaker said that a qualification for inclusion of an intervention in *Hansard* may be that an hon. Member has referred to the intervention.

Mr. Greenway: Perhaps it will get into *Hansard*. I do not think it will damage the reputation of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), but it will not enrich it either.

I return to my example. The contractor used large amounts of the tenant's electricity, kept the gas fires on, and so on. He moved out after the improvements had been made and the tenant was expected to foot the bill. I remember battling with that Labour local authority for a refund of the electricity bill. It was a difficult job. Several tenants received a token payment but they had paid heavily for the gas and electricity consumed by contractors undertaking home improvements. Something must be done about such injustice.

[Mr. Greenway]

People living in urban areas face another difficult problem, and I hope that there will be improvements before long. I refer to the release back into the community of mentally handicapped and mentally ill people. This is not an easy matter in the countryside, but it is especially difficult in urban and built-up areas. I and other hon. Members know of many examples. People come into the community on that basis, but are inadequately prepared. I know of individuals who were put into a flat and were expected to cope after only a few hours' advice from a social worker on how to manage a flat. That was not enough. The people who join the community on that basis are often very disturbed and they create a great deal of local disturbance. I know of a man who often stands naked at his door—it is not that he is being funny or, in his view, provocative; that is how he is. The children run to look at him, and stare and laugh and run about. It disturbs the whole area. The same man has the television on loudly at all hours of the day and night. A person a few doors down frightens his neighbours by his appearance and by smashing the place around. The mother, her husband and small child who live opposite him are very frightened. They have asked me to ask the social services department whether the man is safe. I put that question to the director of social services and received a letter saying that the department could not say that he was safe. That does not inspire any confidence among the local community. This matter must be dealt with.

Recently, we considered a Bill which provided that people would not be released back into the community on that basis until proper statements had been made and they had been properly assessed and considered fit to return to the community. That legislation will make a great difference, and I welcome it.

Mr. Tony Banks: I think that all Labour Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), agree with the hon. Gentleman. There are plenty of cases of people who are allegedly returned to the community inadequately provided for and who, in their turn, provide massive problems for people in the community. What does the hon. Gentleman suggest as a remedy? Each one of us can give anecdotal accounts of such problems. What will the hon. Gentleman do, since these people are turned out because his Government have cut the Health Service and caused the closure of beds and wards in mental hospitals at weekends?

Mr. Greenway: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is being fair to the Government. The return to the community of people who have been mentally ill has been widely supported in the House.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will the hon. Gentleman wait until the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has finished rather than interrupt his speech?

Mr. Greenway: There is a problem in returning to the community people who are fit and equipped to cope. I think that that will happen in future. A Bill is currently passing through the House under which people will have to be assessed before they are returned to the community, and they will be returned only if that assessment shows that they are capable of sustaining a normal social life and of living happily with neighbours. That will help no end.

Mr. Meacher: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to ask whether there will be a Government statement today on the huge cut that they are now proposing in mortgage interest payments for the unemployed for the first six months on the dole? It will affect 90,000 families and will undoubtedly cause evictions and homelessness for thousands of people. Is it not clear that when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment rises to speak in this debate, which has covered housing and the right to buy, her colleague the Secretary of State for Social Services should come to the House to confess that he is destroying the right to buy for thousands of families who are unemployed? It makes a nonsense of today's debate.

I ask you to use your good offices, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to secure a debate or, at least, a statement from the Government on this issue. The announcement was sneaked out at the last moment in a written answer yesterday afternoon after a Green Paper, a six-months consultation period, a White Paper and a three-months Committee stage of the Social Security Bill. This is a last vicious kick at the unemployed which will undermine home ownership and cause untold hardship. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to use your good offices to secure an urgent debate by one means or another.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I know of no request for permission to make a statement on this matter. The hon. Gentleman knows very well that the question of a debate on this issue is not one for me. The Leader of the House is present, and I am sure that he has heard what has been said. We should return to the debate.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to challenge what you have said in any way, but I am sure that you agree that my hon. Friend has raised an important matter. Will you advise the House by what means we may get a straight answer from the Government today? The terrible announcement last night has caused great anxiety to people all over the country, and it is just another example of the subterfuge used by the Government in the treatment of social security during the three-months Committee stage of the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This is not a matter for me and the hon. Gentleman knows as much.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Further to the original point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am mystified and I truly need your guidance. I have heard so much lately about frank and open government and the way in which things are dealt with properly. It bemuses me that we apparently do not have a mechanism which can be applied by the Chair which can ensure that Committees are given the full facts, which would stop issues being brought out in this secretive and covert manner before the Report stage of a Bill. Is there no means by which, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can introduce a new form of mechanism to stop what I consider to be an abuse of the procedures of the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I always think of the wise words of Mr. Speaker Lenthall who, on one famous parliamentary occasion, said that he had neither tongue to

speak nor ears to hear, except in so far as the House shall direct him. These are not matters for me but are for the House to decide. My job is to ensure the observance of the Standing Orders and rules of the House.

Mr. Tony Banks: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely this is a matter that should concern us this morning. I understand that hon. Members will be able to raise this matter during their contributions to the debate, but it is a matter of great concern to all of us—I would hope on both sides of the House—that an issue of such great significance will not be the subject of a ministerial statement. Surely it brings the House into disrepute when planted questions produce answers that have wide ramifications. Hon. Members will all be faced with problems tomorrow in our advice centres, and yet we are not in a position, in the great forum of debate, to have a proper discussion with the relevant Minister present.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We do not need to labour this too much. There is no point of order for me in all of this.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): On a new point, further to the original point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In your answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) you referred to the fact that the Leader of the House is in his place. So far, we have had no evidence that the Leader of the House has heard the points that have been made or that he has a tongue in his head. Can you assist the House by inviting the right hon. Gentleman to comment on the proposal put by my hon. Friend?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There would be no end to my making such invitations if I thought it proper to do so. I remind the House that we are discussing a very important matter in time allocated to private Members. The Leader of the House has obviously heard what has been said. Doubtless he will want to reflect upon it. We should return to the debate.

Mr. Meacher: Further to my original point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you will know, probably better than any of us, when a point of order has been raised from the Front Bench and the Leader of the House is present, it is the normal convention that the Leader of the House volunteers a statement. I wonder whether he would wish to do so.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I shall try to help the progress of the debate. Of course, I have taken account of what has been said and I shall reflect upon it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House will share my gratitude to the Leader of the House.

11.7 am

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): It was well worth delaying my contribution to the debate, simply to see the Leader of the House rise to his feet on this matter of great importance, even to today's debate. The fundamental problem faced by the inner cities is one of poverty. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) pointed out that about 90,000 people will lose by this squalid and mean measure. For Manchester, about which my remarks will be concerned, it means a further drain from the economy and from money going into the private sector about which the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) is so concerned. It will mean further pauperisation of those areas and further lack of opportunities. It will make it impossible to believe that regeneration of those areas will come about through the private sector mechanisms which Conservative Members seem to think will work. This issue is of signal importance. The House would be negligent if it did not demand a more adequate statement from the Government and if it does not get a definition and clarification of what lies behind the Government's actions.

In parts of Stretford, my own constituency, we now have 45 to 50 per cent. adult male unemployment. In the adjoining constituency, Manchester, Central, unemployment is at 60 per cent. in certain parts, and there is unemployment of over 70 per cent. of those under 24. Among the ethnic minorities, unemployment is now at such a level as almost inevitably to provoke the tensions which hon. Members on both sides of the House have been warning about for many years, yet the Government have done nothing about the problem.

There has been a massive leeching of income from the local economy. In effect, we have seen the destruction of the local economy. There have been estimates, not from Government sources, because the Government refuse to publish the information, that in the city of Manchester over half the population are living at or below supplementary benefit level. Imagine the amount of money which has disappeared from the Manchester economy, which has disappeared from the workshops in the very private sector which Conservative Members pretend to support. It is the Government's failure to give adequate income support in those areas which has destroyed the private sector as well as parts of the public sector in the centre of Manchester.

Since the Government came to power, over £1 million every week of every year has been taken away through rate support grant from the city of Manchester. At the same time housing benefit has been reduced, so that once again income disappears from the city centre. The cycle of poverty that existed when the Government came to power has not stood still, but a mechanism has been set up which has led to that cycle of poverty acting like a lance against any means of economic support. That is the reality and the scale of what the Government have done.

Conservative Members talk about the possibility of the recreation of the private sector and its ability to begin to revitalise that area, but they are talking about a totally different world from the one occupied by people on the housing estates in my constituency and, indeed, in most of our northern cities. The private sector simply does not exist in any recognisable form, nor does the private sector which does exist have the capacity to do what Conservative Members talk about. We do not have the regional capital markets in Britain such as those in Baltimore in the United States to which Conservative Members refer. Because of the failure of this country's capital system, we have a concentration of capital outside the inner city areas.

A substantial part of Trafford park industrial estate is in my constituency. It rightly claims to have been among the greatest industrial estates in the world. The irony is that the private sector and the local authority, which was Conservative until a week ago, have demanded assistance from the Government, yet the Government have been pussyfooting around with the assistance that they will provide. The private sector knows very well that there is no opportunity for it to continue to grow unless it can

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operate in an environment that will attract more companies into the area, so that it can build up an interlocking private and public system on the Trafford park estate.

That estate is in the borough of Trafford. Its importance lies in the fact that even my constituents, who live in the city of Manchester, have historically depended on the estate as the source of their employment, yet the Government have consistently refused to give partnership status to the Trafford park area. If such status were given, there would be a possibility of reinvestment from the public and private sectors together, to assist those who live in the partnership area—in Moss Side and Hulme—who have looked to Trafford park for their employment in the past.

I hope that today we shall hear that the Government have changed their mind on that policy, but I fear not, because the classic line that the Government have taken is that the boundaries are drawn along local authority lines and are not to be changed simply because of the way in which the regional and sub-regional economy works. I should be delighted to hear that I am wrong.

Far more fundamental than all the talk about the possibility of housing investment from the private sector in the centre of Manchester is a major problem besetting the city of Manchester, partly because of the historical process of the flight from the inner urban areas as they become old, and as mobile and relatively affluent people search for houses outside the centre. Today we have heard about the pressure on coming back to the centre of London because of the refusal to permit development along the M4 corridor and elsewhere. That is sound and logical for London and Greater London, but we do not have that problem in cities such as Manchester and most of the northern cities. It does not arise, because development land is still available on the outer rim and in parts of the former Greater Manchester council area. That flight from the inner cities is dictated not by relatively dear land there, but by the dereliction of the land.

I recognise that there has been an increase in the amount of money given under the derelict land grant. I applaud that for what it is worth. However, I remind the House that that increase is as nothing compared with the amount of money that has been withdrawn from the local authorities which have to operate those and other grants, making it unlikely that they will be able to provide adequately furnished sites even for private sector development in inner city areas. The private sector will simply move four or five miles down the road and find more suitable acceptable land for developers and purchasers. That issue must be tackled. More important is the fact that derelict land grant does not apply to areas which are categorised as obsolescent. Yet in the north-west, particularly Manchester, we have a tremendous amount of land that would be classified not as derelict but as obsolescent, so it would not be grant-aided if the local authority or the private sector wanted to develop.

Those are real and practical reasons why we shall not see the return of private house building to the inner city areas. Because of cuts in finance to local authorities, there has been a massive withdrawal of money from public sector housing. One of the direct results is that the city of Manchester has had to make some difficult choices. One hard choice that it has had to make, about which I have mixed feelings, is to reduce the amount of money available for improvement grants, which has had a significant effect on the private sector. The withdrawal of improvement grants has meant the slowing down virtually to zero of the revitalisation of parts of the city with many owner-occupiers and some private landlords. It is desperately important that the money goes back to authorities such as Manchester and into the improvement grant system.

I welcome the motion, but I feel that the Government fail to recognise the tensions in our inner-city areas. The crisis is already there and among us. Despair, misery and poverty are faced by constituents whom I and many Labour Members represent. The problem will not go away, and it is not getting better. As every day ticks by, their plight gets worse and there is more of the despair that produced the riots. I do not want to become a predictor of riots. I hope fervently that no such thing will happen again, but the Government have not done one thing to make such riots less likely. In fact, everything that they have done — their withdrawal of money and their contempt for people who live in those areas—has made it more likely that there will be another explosion in our inner cities.

11.19 am

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): I join in the congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on winning the ballot and raising an interesting subject. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister, because I shall not be able to stay for her speech. Another Minister is visiting my constituency this afternoon and I hope that he will be able to give me a lift down there.

It was humbug for Opposition Members to interpose spurious points of order in our serious debate. The Audit Commission report on the management of council housing reveals that 11 Labour-controlled local housing authorities have a total of £100 million of rent arrears. The modest savings from the Government's proposal will total only £30 million. It is a bit rich for the Labour party to say that all hell will be let loose.

The protests of Opposition Members have more to do with a mischievous, scaremongering campaign to try to frighten council tenants from purchasing their houses.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Raynsford *rose*——

Mr. Chope: Practically everyone knows that the majority of those who become unemployed are re-employed within six months, and it is most unlikely that any building society would take eviction proceedings against those who are temporarily unemployed and are unable to meet their mortgage commitments.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. John Fraser: Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that one of the crucial decisions is made before a purchase takes place? Some people on low incomes want to buy tumbledown houses and improve them, but are worried that they may become unemployed. We can always advise them, "Do not worry too much. You will be covered for your mortgage interest repayments in exactly the same way as tenants are covered for rent arrears when they become unemployed." The Government's announcement will undermine people who have to decide whether to buy and manage their own home.

Mr. Chope: That is not a complete answer, because the hon. Gentleman ignores the significant group who become unemployed but do not qualify for supplementary benefit. That is not a deterrent to them to buy their own homes.

Mr. Corbyn *rose—*

Mr. Chope: I will not give way again, because I ought to get on with the substance of what I have to say.

I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) is not here, because I expected him to say what wonderful inner city policies had been pursued in Wandsworth and how they had received the endorsement of the electorate on Thursday last week.

The Borough News in Wandsworth today states:

"All the political pundits, except perhaps the staunchest Tory"

—

I suppose that we must add the name of the hon. Member for Tooting—

"were confounded last Thursday by the result of the local elections.

For the massive swing to the Labour side and the vast majority that most forecasters had predicted never materialised, and the Labour party was left with egg on its face and tears in the eyes of many of the defeated condidates.

The opposition parties will be picking over the bones of the election for many weeks to come to try to discover the reason why Wandsworth should have held for the Conservatives, when boroughs all around, like Richmond, Kingston and Sutton were going over to the Alliance and Labour".

Mr. Tony Banks: What about Lambeth?

Mr. Chope: The article refers to Lambeth. It concludes that people in Wandsworth voted on local issues and decided that the Conservative party in the borough had delivered the goods for them. In searching for solutions to inner city problems, the Government should not look much further than what has happened in Wandsworth and they should try to get what has been achieved there applied elsewhere in the country.

Above all else, people in the inner cities want commonsense policies, well-managed resources, good value for money and an attractive environment for residents and for enterprise. Those are the policies of the true friends of the inner cities.

Labour's policies for the inner cities are epitomised by a press story from Hackney. Judge Stuckley at Shoreditch county court said that an appalling case had come before him and that he wished that he was able to imprison the Hackney councillors who were responsible. The case concerned Mrs. Keaney, who has had five operations for cancer and waited more than a year for repairs to be carried out to her home in Hackney, notwithstanding the fact that she had obtained a court order. The Hackney council was in contempt of court for doing nothing about her problems. It permitted squatters to take over the property and wrote them a charming letter hoping that they would not be disturbed. The squatters responded by setting fire to the house.

Mrs. Keaney, who had been a council tenant for 15 years, lived in a property where the roof had fallen in, there was extensive damp, the walls were crumbling, and there were large holes in the floors where the boards had decayed. She had to move into cramped accommodation next door and her only remedy was to go to the courts. Yet the motto of Hackney council is, "Working for local people". Where does Mrs. Keaney fit into Labour's freedom and fairness campaign? There is plenty of freedom for squatters, but no fairness for tenants.

I have been asked about rent arrears. Is not it amazing that Hackney's rent arrears, as a percentage of the rent roll, have increased from 10·2 per cent. in 1983 to 27·2 per cent. last year? If the council had got in a little more of its rent, it might have been able to pay for Mrs. Keaney's repairs.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Tony Banks *rose——*

Mr. Chope: The front page of today's *South London Press* gives another vivid example of monumental waste. The Afro-Caribbean club in Railton road, Lambeth has been closed against, says the paper,

"a background of violence and confrontation with the police".

The club was opened three years ago on a £1·5 million inner city partnership grant as a community centre. In March, a man was shot in a feud between drug dealers. Later, a schoolboy was stabbed and, after muggers were arrested outside the club, two police officers were attacked. The chairman of the management committee said:

"Eighty per cent. of the people who go to the club do not come from Lambeth."

I have found out that the chairman, who has mismanaged the club in that way, is also chairman of Lambeth's community-police consultative group.

The mind boggles at the waste of resources and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell the House that the Government will apply some realism to the allocation of resources. If we carry on pouring money into places such as Lambeth, to enable vitriolic councillors and local people committed to the Socialist cause to misspend and abuse that money, we shall be doing everybody a disservice.

The most important need of the inner cities is not resources, but good management of resources. The way forward is the Wandsworth way. Wandsworth has spent £40 million in grants for private homes since 1981-82, and is spending another £12 million this year. It has spent £80 million on repairs and refurbishments to council homes in the same period. Since 1979 it has reduced substandard housing from 15 per cent. to 4 per cent., housing that needs repairs by over 13 per cent. and houses that need a bathroom from 12 per cent. to 2 per cent. Wandsworth has a capital spending programme for the current year of £65 million, the second highest in London.

Mr. Raynsford *rose——*

Mr. Tony Banks *rose——*

Mr. Chope: Wandsworth has also attracted massive private investment. On top of all that, it has saved £25 million on council services by going out to competitive tender and often to private contractors.

Mr. Corbyn: What about the grass-cutting contract?

Mr. Chope: The grass-cutting contract has saved substantial sums for ratepayers in Wandsworth.

Mr. Corbyn: Is that the first contract or the second one?

Mr. Chope: Rather than engage in a debate with hon. Members who are interrupting from a sedentary position——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose——*

Mr. Chope: I rest my case on the verdict of the electorate delivered on Thursday last week. About £100

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million has been raised from the sale of council homes in Wandsworth and most of that money has been ploughed back into improving council estates. If that had not been done, wards with 60 per cent. of the electorate living in council houses would not have returned Conservative candidates. Wandsworth does not have cheap rents, but it does have good services.

Contrast that position with what happens in Lambeth, which has an equivalent population. In Wandsworth, the average rate bill is below £300, yet in Lambeth it is £543. The cost of refuse collection in Wandsworth is less than £9 per head while in Lambeth it is more than £17. The cost of caretaker services, which are far more efficient in Wandsworth, is just short of £9 per head, whereas it is £25 per head in Lambeth. Street cleaning services are much more efficient in Wandsworth but much less expensive. Rent arrears in Lambeth are £14·2 million, whereas in Wandsworth they are £3·1 million. There are squatters in 29 properties in Wandsworth, whereas more than 1,000 properties in Lambeth have squatters.

The most dramatic statistic is that the amount of money spent on repairs and renovation per dwelling in Lambeth is £118, yet in Wandsworth it is £786. That is why, in Lambeth, if a tenant wants repairs to his dwelling, he must go to the county court to get the council to act. Unemployment in Wandsworth, although it is sadly still far too high, is the lowest in inner London, whereas it is more than 20 per cent. in Lambeth.

The results of that superficial comparison between Lambeth and Wandsworth makes one amazed to think that an assistant chief executive in Lambeth who was earning £24,000 a year, presiding over the mismanagement that I have described, should have been appointed this week as the £37,000-a-year deputy education director of the Inner London education authority. He admitted that he had no education management experience and said that ILEA has a plethora of educationists and needs someone with a different angle on management. Inner London education needs an angle in management such as that produced in Lambeth as much as it needs a sore head. It is extremely sad that bigoted councillors can be elected who then behave in a thoroughly undemocratic manner by giving jobs to the boys and to people who are not worth the £37,000 a year that that gentleman will be paid.

The policies that have been pursued in Conservative-controlled councils such as Wandsworth are the way forward in the inner cities. The Government should not be so apologetic, as they sometimes are, about resources. Resources are being ploughed into the inner cities that are under Socialist control and they have been badly and gravely mismanaged. The Government should be much more robust in imposing penalties on those authorities which do not pursue reasonable and commonsense policies.

It should not be thought that what I am saying is to a great extent politically partisan. My views are supported by the Audit Commission, and I commend to all local authorities the report "Managing the Crisis in Council Housing". It is a well-researched and long report, so I shall not quote extensively from it. On page 4, it states that the scale of the value improvement potential in council house repairs is very large. It continues:

"If all authorities successfully apply the recommendations in this report, the benefits will be substantial: perhaps £80-100 million a year could be saved in excessive administration costs; the number of empty council properties could be reduced by 20-25,000; use of bed and breakfast accommodation could be more than 25 per cent. lower; rent arrears might be reduced by £100 million, or even more; and given better services, the funds available for maintenance could be increased by as much as £1 billion a year."

Our inner cities are crying out for maintenance of their fabric. That is not being delivered by the Labour party, and the Conservative Government should no longer aid and abet the Labour party in presiding over the decay in so many inner cities.

11.34 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) for tabling this sensible motion. There is nothing in the motion with which my colleagues and I would disagree, although it leaves many things unsaid. Some of them are left unsaid because they are not appropriate to the specific points that the hon. Gentleman was trying to make, and others are left unsaid because they might cause disagreement.

The subject at the core of the motion is partnership in housing provision and the partnership principle in other provision. May I say, a little tongue in cheek, that I do not need my research assistant to advise me on these matters because, since leaving college, I have spent all my adult life in my constituency. I know at first hand and well appreciate the issues, and my experience is added to by regular daily contact with constituents who are the victims of inner city deprivation. I appreciate the daily concerns of tens of thousands of people in London and other inner cities.

I need not be as strident as the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope). I am encouraged by the thought that, as a result of last week's elections, the Liberal party can speak with more authority by virtue of its increased representation on inner city authorities. In the five northern former metropolitan counties, the alliance has more councillors than the Conservative party. That is a substantial change. Only one metropolitan district remains under Tory control, and that is Solihull in the west midlands. In the elections in London last week, the number of alliance candidates elected to local boroughs in the 12 inner London authorities doubled from the number elected four years ago. Only a few London boroughs—I am afraid to say that Newham is one—do not have Liberal or Social Democratic councillors.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I correct the hon. Gentleman's faulty geography? Although Newham has all the problems of the inner city, it is outside the Inner London education authority area.

Mr. Hughes: That is right. I was simply reminded by seeing the hon. Gentleman in the Chamber that Newham is one of the few authorities in Britain to be a single-party state after the elections. I cannot say how long that will continue.

The elections also showed that grave distortions are caused by our electoral system, which do not help the partnership principle. I shall not make a speech about electoral reform. However, a good article written in *The Times* by the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) about the results of the ILEA elections shows the gross disproportion of seats to votes cast.

The Minister will be aware that the massive majority for the Labour party in the ILEA election, with a small role for the Conservative party and the alliance, is a grossly disproportionate reflection of the views of the electors. Such results will encourage the fainthearts in the Conservative party before long that the arguments for reform in the electoral system for local government are overwhelming. In Wandsworth, the Tories remain in control, but the Labour party obtained more votes. In many other boroughs such as Lambeth, Lewisham and Greenwich, the Labour party has a large majority of seats but did not obtain a majority of votes. There is an urgent case for reassessing the need to ensure that the entire electorate is fairly represented in our town halls.

The Minister will know that London is still unable to have parish or community councils. The rest of urban Britain can, and there are some areas such as Birmingham which are parishing at the moment. Much of the alienation that is to be found in the inner city in London arises because there is no very local structure of representation. Will the Minister discuss that with her colleagues, especially if we are to have more local government legislation next year in the light of the Widdicombe inquiry?

Mr. Rowe: I strongly support parish and community councils, but the hon. Gentleman's support for them seems to contradict what he said about the need to take more account of the aggregation of votes across a local authority area rather than the number of votes cast locally for a candidate.

Mr. Hughes: There is no contradiction. It is quite possible to have a fair electoral system for local government and also to have a more local system of representation. My experience is that the people of London would appreciate being involved locally in decisions as much as possible.

Housing is one of the themes of the motion. Partnership is manifestly welcome and works. The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and I have watched with some frustration what looked like a hold-up in the partnership scheme for Coin street in Lambeth and Southwark. The housing development has now been approved by the Department of the Environment. The community resisted speculative development, to produce homes for local people, mainly on a co-operative basis, on a site which had been depressed because of speculative office development.

The scheme is now going ahead, but there was resistance to it right to the end from, I gather, the Conservative party in Lambeth and perhaps, by virtue of a knock-on effect, the Government. Such a partnership scheme is to be applauded. It combines public and private money and the interests, expertise and commitment of local people. We won a similar battle in my constituency recently at the Cherry garden site. What would originally have been all private development will now have some local authority development, planned with the involvement of local people. I hope that we can also obtain the same community participation on the Brunel road/Swan road site in Rotherhithe.

Partnership is vital, not least because the alternatives have failed. We have had the blind municipalism of the inner city, increasingly dogmatic Labour-controlled authorities. People do not want to be condemned to municipal ghettos. We have also had unbridled commercialism such as we now have in the docklands. This is no good either, because it prices land and homes out of the range of the people who want to live there and have a right to live there because it is their community.

It is no use telling housing associations that there is derelict land in north Barnet when those associations want to cater for the elderly in Southwark, Lewisham, Lambeth, Hackney, Greenwich or Newham. The partnerships must be where the people live.

We must consider the matter locally and nationally. We must have an honest, open and wide-ranging debate about housing finance. I appreciate what the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire suggested. We must consider how building societies and other similar institutions contribute funds. I believe that the money should come only from institutions with a housing interest and which will recycle the money into housing. The profits of finance houses might well not go into housing and we would run the risk of unacceptable commercial gain. We should also consider the equity of tax subsidies given to private and public occupiers. There is a proper debate to be had about the differential between the subsidies that the Government give to people who buy their property and those who rent it. The equation has been changed with inflation. We must correct the unfairness.

The Government might produce a Green Paper or a White Paper about financing housebuilding in the inner cities which embraces all of the possibilities. Last night's announcement, which was the subject of a point of order today, gives rise to great anxiety. It is unacceptable to withdraw support from people who, through no fault of their own, have become unemployed and have been encouraged to buy their own home, perhaps stretching themselves financially to do so.

Mr. Steen: Has not the hon. Gentleman got it the wrong way round? My understanding is that the Government will meet mortgage interest payments during a person's unemployment but that the sum involved is taken out of the sum that the person realises on sale. The Government are not cutting anything. They are merely saying that a profit should not be made out of public money that is pumped into a private home.

Mr. Hughes: I do not believe that that was the announcement. It was to do with the first six months of unemployment. The withdrawal of support is a great threat to people who have just started to buy who or who can only just afford to buy. The latter condition applies to an increasing number of people.

There is desperate need for partnership in regard to jobs. Local authorities should be encouraged to have enterprise forums where public authorities and private entrepreneurs can discuss how to pool their money to generate trade and work. We should have a network which joins people with skills, those who are willing to learn them, people with facilities and people with the service skills to back them all up. We must find a remedy for the gaps in provision.

Inner London desperately needs some form of development agency. During the past 20 or 30 years, inner London has suffered more job losses than any other major conurbation. The docklands regeneration deals with only a fraction of the problem. The time has come to recognise that inner London needs some form of development

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agency to put it on a par with the deprived regions of Europe, which draw money from the European regional and social funds, and to reconsider how the urban programme works.

We have a muddled urban programme. In the seven south and east London boroughs, sometimes called the crescent of deprivation — it runs from Islington to Lambeth — three have one form of status under the urban programme, one has another and three have yet another. There is, however, the same massive deprivation in parts of all of those boroughs. Unemployment in my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Norwood has increased by more than 10 per cent. in the past year. We need a quickly adjustable mechanism of support.

We have had a small initiative in which there are eight target areas, including one in Peckham, but that is not enough because one needs to include it in a large package that needs to be substantially reformed. The urban programme has been developed piecemeal, and now we need a comprehensive review of it so that it achieves what it is intended to achieve, which is to meet the greatest urban needs.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) spoke about health care in inner London. It is in a desperate state. Inner London boroughs have some of the highest numbers of socially deprived people who most need health care of any part of Britain. They have the highest number of pensioners. Our levels of perinatal and infant mortality are consistently higher than in outer London, and our infant mortality rates are higher than those in south Yorkshire or Merseyside. Inner London suffers more deaths from cirrhosis than any other conurbation. Deaths from accidents, violence and poisoning are increasing in inner London, although they are decreasing nationally. Male suicides are increasing faster in inner London than elsewhere, and we have the highest levels of mortality from many preventable diseases.

Obviously, we have a higher proportion of old and vulnerable people in our population than elsewhere. In my area the unemployed account for 28 per cent. of the male population. We need to reconsider the funding of the Health Service in London. I know that that is not the Minister's specific responsibility but she may appreciate our anxiety. The health districts in inner London are always in a minority in their health region and compete against the outer London health districts. That means that there is a transfer of funds under the resource allocation working party formula from the so-called prosperous south-east to the rest of the country, and, within each of the four Thames regional health authorities, from inner London to outer London. The formula was designed at a time of growth in the national economy, but it is being imposed at a time of little growth. As a result, it is causing gross and severe hardship.

When one of my constituents had a heart attack recently, he had to be driven privately to hospital because there were no ambulances to take him. People wait in hospital corridors, and are turned away when they arrive for their beds. Although the Government are encouraging facilities to help drug abusers, young alcohol addicts and young, vulnerable, psychiatrically disturbed people, those units are to be cut in the Maudsley hospital, which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security visited yesterday.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that one way to proceed would be to create an elected London health authority? That would avoid the ridiculous competition between the home counties, the suburban areas and the inner urban areas. Secondly, does he agree that the figure for the funding of primary health care for people in London is misleading because the overall costs include the costs of the teaching hospitals, which are essentially a national resource, the costs of which are often set against the cost of health care in London?

Mr. Hughes: I entirely accept both those points. Hon. Members of all parties in inner London now agree that the RAWP formula should not be applied at present, and that money must be found elsewhere for constituencies, such as that of the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe). I am not saying that such shire areas should not receive funding, but because we are now spending disproportionately little on our Health Service compared with other countries and our needs, we must change the formula and fund national and regional specialties separately. We in the alliance have long believed that the only medium and long-term solutions are to create one London regional health authority so that we do not have this crazy competition between the deprived inner city and outer areas, which naturally want more funds.

Waiting lists continue to grow. Every time a patient is not treated, his chances of working and contributing to the community are reduced. That creates a cycle of decreased participation and yet again reduces possibilities for the regeneration of inner cities.

Yesterday it was reported in the *London Standard* that next Wednesday the Home Secretary is likely to make an announcement about policing personnel levels in London. The problems will not go away even if the number of police is massively increased. The Commissioner asked for an establishment of 30,000, and I believe that that is needed. An increase of 1,200 in over three years will not be sufficient. Before next Wednesday, will the Minister relay this point to her colleagues while not encouraging the police to become complacent—because there is a danger of that—and believe that more personnel will solve all the problems? Their crime detection rate is below 20 per cent., and the statistics for their service delivery in London are not wonderful. London and Londoners need greater protection. They are vulnerable, and are regularly the subjects of increasingly horrifying attacks. Unless more police can work on the streets with our communities, we shall continue to be deprived. People will be afraid to live in the inner cities, and will move to safer places elsewhere.

The debate has given us an opportunity to discuss a range of our cities' problems. They are all urgent because unless our cities survive and prosper, the nation will fail.

11.56 am

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I am glad to have an opportunity to speak in the debate. First, I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) for the way in which he introduced the debate. His speech was one of the most far-reaching and all-embracing that I have heard on inner cities. We are all grateful to him for approaching the subject in that way.

I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who has also added to the debate. It is a difficult subject, and all hon. Members are trying to find new solutions and ways of tackling the

problem. It is appropriate that we should have as many contributions as possible to the debate, so I shall not detain the House with one of my customarily long speeches. The House does not debate the inner cities often enough. During the past few months we have discussed some aspects of them — for example, in the Housing and Planning Bill — but it is a rare treat to have a full debate, and we are deeply grateful to my hon. Friend for it.

The motion highlights housing and related matters. Inadequate housing is at the root of the inner-city problems, but there is nothing new about bad housing. The slums of the 1930s have given rise to the slums of the 1980s. The back-to-backs are replaced by vast soulless impersonalised blocks, towers and estates. In the 1930s the back-to-backs were in private ownership, but today the soulless estates are in public ownership.

In any debate, it is necessary to define one's terms. The House takes for granted the phrase "inner city", but it has assumed a new meaning, and it is important to identify what we are talking about. The phrase no longer means a geographical business district in part of the city. We use the expression to describe the worst of poverty—people locked into the worst conditions, with the highest percentage of deprivation factors such as low income, unemployment, old age, bad housing, membership of an ethnic minority and few prospects.

"Inner city" equals a concentration of high indices of disadvantage. Those ingredients can be found in the centres of great old cities. There are pockets of inner-city deprivation in Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford, Glasgow and Newcastle. However, it also exists outside inner cities, on outer city estates where the inner city populations have moved lock, stock and barrel. As we know, the comprehensive redevelopment programmes of the 1950s and 1960s moved a high concentration of inner-city dwellers to council estates outside the cities.

"Inner city" equals ingredients of disadvantage compared with the rest of the population. It means people without professions, jobs, credit facilities and bank accounts — people who are the products of unemployment, poverty, and single-parent families. An over-concentration of such people in certain geographical areas and streets describes the phrase "inner city", and it may or may not be in the geographical location of the heart of our great conurbation. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire will agree that the phrase inner city must include those vast, soulless public estates on the outskirts of inner cities. They are as bad as, if not worse than, some of the traditional inner city localities.

Successive Governments have tried to do something. It would be wrong to suggest that the problems of the inner city are the monopoly of any one party. One can trace the beginning of awareness of the problems of the inner cities to the Labour Government in 1968. The then Prime Minister shifted rate support grants from the shire counties to the inner cities. In 1968, £60 million was transferred from the shire counties to the inner cities and the Conservative party created an uproar. Now, 18 years later, the Labour Benches are creating an uproar because the same thing has been done by a Conservative Government.

Mr. Corbyn: Was not the shift in rate support grant in 1968 occasioned by the fact that the Government of the day recognised that there was a basic problem of inner city deprivation? Our reasons for demanding the restoration of the rate support grant today is the same — inner city development can be dealt with by public sector investment through local authorities. It is for that reason that we are demanding the restoration of the money.

Mr. Steen: I did not quite follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. I note what he said, but I shall not be drawn. More and more public money has been pumped into inner cities, and there seems to be a correlation between the increasing sums of money pumped in and the worsening situation. The hon. Gentleman will probably disagree, but I shall advance my argument.

Mr. Corbyn: If the hon. Gentleman accepts that the Government have reduced the rate support grant to inner city areas, by and large he must accept that those authorities which have managed to maintain services have done so largely by increasing rate support by borrowing. Investment in inner cities has been self-financed by the people in the poorest areas. Our argument is that national resources have to be put into the poorest areas, rather than inner cities being expected to pay for their own poverty.

Mr. Steen: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's clarification of that telling point, with which I have to deal, and I hope that I can deal with it successfully.

In 1968 there was both the shift in the rate support grant and the dreaming up of the urban aid programme. It was only a small operation then, but has now been enlarged to £320 million. There was the community development project, and the young volunteer force, which I had the great privilege of directing. There was also the concept of pockets of deprivation — an idea with which hon. Members may be familiar. The theory was that there was nothing wrong with the inner cities except for small pockets of deprivation which could be cleaned up by money direct from the centre or the shire counties.

By 1970, with the change of Administration, the idea was that some research was needed, and a number of schemes were set up. There was the neighbourhood scheme and the quality of life studies, and larger amounts of money were concentrated into the areas. Hon. Members will remember that the idea was that the pockets of deprivation could be cleared out of the inner cities by pumping more public money through these schemes. However, the problem did not go away.

In 1973 the then Secretary of State for the Environment in the Conservative Administration said that the approach was wrong and that there should be a total approach, looking at the city as a whole. He started more research. He had the six towns study, the urban guidelines studies and the inner area studies. In 1974, so enthusiastic were the Conservative Administration that an urban deprivation unit was formed, which I believe is still hard at work in the Home Office.

Later in 1974 the Labour Government appointed a Minister with special responsibilities for the urban areas. He disappeared without trace six months later and in 1976 the Minister of State, Home Office said that everything was wrong. He did not believe in either the pockets of deprivation or in the total approach, but in a comprehensive community programme — that was the weasel word. The problem would be solved if local authorities drew up a new list of priorities with central Government. That was the beginning of the partnership

[Mr. Steen]

between local and central Government. The comprehensive community programme had a trial run in Gateshead, but never got any further. That programme disappeared without trace in 1977.

In 1977 the Secretary of State for the Environment in the Labour Government introduced a White Paper on policy for the inner cities and all the familiar jargon was there. In 1978 there was the Inner Urban Areas Act, by which local authorities were to assist industry by means of loans and grants. Also in 1978 came the partnership programme, which we now take for granted. The Secretary of State set up the partnership authorities. The beauty of that is that it is not a partnership. It is just a matter of public sector people getting together and disagreeing. It is a lovely system whereby the Minister comes up by train or by chauffeur-driven car, attends the meeting and goes off again. It is not really a partnership in the sense of the word.

If one cannot be a partnership authority, the second option is to be a programme authority. I am not sure what the programme is, but I suspect that it is much like the partnership, in that people attend meetings and argue. There is a third division for the designated districts, which are down-market. They get, not a Minister of State, but a junior Minister. I mean no disrespect to my hon. Friend the Minister, but designated districts are definitely down-market and do not get the top brass. Again, the scheme concerns only public authorities.

Since the White Paper and the Inner Urban Areas Act there has been an enlarged urban aid programme. That is not a medical term, but a device which the Government have used to pump more public money into the partnership programme and designated districts. In 1979 the Minister of State, Department of the Environment said—and I quote from my book on this subject, "New Life for Old Cities" — it is a well-researched document and hon. Members may find it of interest—on page 17:

"The Government is not prepared to abandon the inner cities or the people who live there to a steadily declining future. In Britain we have a political commitment which the present Government"——

that is the Conservative Government—

"has renewed and reasserted in what we believe will be a more efficient form to regenerate the inner areas of our cities. The aim is to arrest and reverse the downward spiral rather than simply to alleviate the various symptoms of decline in isolation. Our goal is to make the inner areas of our cities places where people want to live and work, somewhere where the private investor will put his money."

That was published in 1979.

If one looks at what was said by the Home Secretary in 1968, under a Labour Administration, one sees that he said virtually the same thing:

"The aim of the urban aid programme is to provide for the care of our citizens who live in the poorest and most overcrowded parts of our cities and towns. It is intended to arrest this as far as possible by financial means and to reverse the downward spiral which afflicts so many of these areas as a deadly quagmire of need and poverty."

The true situation is best mirrored by what was said by the Secretary of State for Energy in 1981. This was under a Conservative Administration:

"Britain's worn out industrial areas will be passed by in the coming economic recovery, bringing heavy social consequences, bewilderment and frustration."

Until 1980 it was believed that all the different devices and sums of money that were poured into the inner cities in different ways would solve the social problems. When the Conservative Administration came to power in 1979 they had to find a new way to approach these problems, because the other approaches had failed. They looked at America and saw that President Carter had taken the public money injection concept to its logical conclusion in what was called the model city programme. They do not take half measures in the United States. They took one small neighbourhood area of Atlanta and said that they would pour into it whatever amount of public money was needed to change completely the face of the neighbourhood. They provided $173 million over three years. Everybody was moved out of that neighbourhood. The houses were completely rebuilt. New drains and new lighting were provided. Everything was done to change that neighbourhood completely.

What was the position 10 years later? They looked at the social indices for that area and found that about the same number of young people were unemployed, or were on probation, or were suffering from drink and drug-related problems. They also found the same problems resulting from old age and from physical and mental illness. The Americans have proved the point better than have any Government in this country that the inner city problems will not be solved by pumping large sums of public money into one area. The people living in that area will not be changed. The problems which those people manifest will not be changed.

When the Government came to office in 1979 they adopted a new approach. I do not say that it has been overwhelmingly successful, but it is a different approach. Instead of pumping any amount of public money into tackling social problems, the Government said that they would try to create a new kind of partnership. In his excellent speech my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire very properly outlined the partnership between the public and the private sectors. The Government's urban strategy, through the urban development corporations, the enterprise zones, the freeports and the Merseyside task force, is designed to attract private money by injecting small amounts of public money. The derelict land grants, the urban development grants, the inner city enterprises, the garden festivals and the enlarged urban aid programmes are designed to try inject private funds into these schemes, in partnership with public funds.

Despite the injection of public and private money, the inner city problems continue to get worse. That must be a matter of concern to every right hon. and hon. Member. Some Opposition Members say that more public money needs to be spent on inner cities, and some of my right hon. and hon. Friends say that there should be a partnership between the private and public sectors. I do not believe that the problems that people face will be solved by offering false hopes and false prospectuses. New life in the inner cities will be created only by adopting a different approach, because the problems of the inner cities relate to people. No Government have introduced that dimension. It is far easier to work with the macroeconomics — with the banks and the building societies, to boost the urban aid programme and to set up urban aid programmes — than it is to work with and involve the very people who are the problem and help them to help themselves to solve their problems.

I shall be accused of adopting a simplistic approach, but all the other approaches have failed. The man from

Westminster descending from a chauffeur-driven limousine for a partnership meeting and then disappearing is no substitute for giving power to people in the inner cities. They must be given access to money and the power to make decisions about the matters that affect their destiny. Central Government and local government have failed. Let us give the people a chance.

What is required? First, we must shift control over homes from the public sector to the people who live in the inner cities. That means that a mechanism must be found whereby a high percentage of those who live in the inner cities are able to live in properly run houses. We must find a way in which rents can be converted immediately into mortgage repayments so that they own the fabric of the houses in which they live. Nothing would be more dramatic than to change the housing stock in the inner areas.

We must also change the attitude of the public sector, whether it be central Government or local government. They must trust the people and involve them in finding solutions to these problems. We must also give people access to cheap funds so that they are able to start up in business and in housing. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire mentioned Baltimore. In Baltimore they trusted the people. The banks provided cheap money for people to do up their homes and to start up businesses in that inner city area. We must find "catalytic" cash, if I may call it that, for some of the deprived people who do not have security on which to borrow funds. We must lift the planning restrictions. We shall not change the face of the inner cities unless the planning regime is lifted. Some of our inner cities could hardly look worse if there were no planners. Liverpool is a good example.

Why do we not allow anything to be built in the inner cities which is not noisy, which does not smell, and which does not block light? Why do we not try this in one area which is in decline and allow a free market force economy to operate? We must encourage private enterprise and business by launching industrial revenue bonds. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire was right to refer to these. This country needs industrial revenue bonds and municipal revenue bonds. I shall not tire the House by explaining how they work, but I would set up neighbourhood councils and transfer authority to the people living in those neighbourhoods to care for those neighbourhoods. Home helps should come from the neighbourhoods. Electricians and plumbers should come from the area in which the work needs to be done. We must get the mums to run their own play schemes. Local government should trust the people by financing them to help themselves.

Finally, we must do something about public derelict land. I have had this bee in my bonnet for 10 years, and it is worth mentioning it yet again. Every year the amount of public derelict land on the land register increases. Whatever the Government do, the amount of land on the land register goes up. In another book which I hope to bring out shortly I shall show that over one third of a million acres of public land are lying dormant, derelict and under-utilised. For that reason, the pressure on the green fields continues.

Those of us living around the large urban conurbations will find constant pressure to build by house builders and others. That is understandable, because they have no land to build on in the inner city, even though I believe that one third of a million acres in public ownership are under-utilised.

Plymouth is a good example. My constituency nearly surrounds it. The pressure to build on my green field sites and agricultural land is great because Plymouth city council and all the other public undertakings inside them, including the Ministry of Defence and other Departments, are not releasing public land which should be used first for housing before the green field sites.

There are things to be done. The Labour party is wrong to go down the same alleyway as it went down in 1968 of throwing money at the problems in order to make them go away. They have not gone away. The Government have done the right thing in obtaining a partnership between the private and public sectors. The one dimension that is still being left out is the people, and that is the next approach in solving the problem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) promised us a short speech. At 25 minutes it was the longest speech since that of the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) who opened the debate.

12.20 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I shall attempt to be briefer, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I must apologise to the Minister for the fact that I fear that I shall probably miss her contribution because I have a long-standing engagement to attend.

I have raised the issue of housing in my constituency in inner London many times in the House and I make no apology for doing so again because it matters deeply to thousands of my constituents. Far too many are forced to live in inadequate, damp, mould-encrusted, overcrowded and unsuitable homes. The conditions in which many of my constituents have to live out their lives, bring up children, entertain visitors and try to make a decent life and a decent home for themselves are totally inadequate and unsuitable.

Many young couples in my constituency are desperately anxious to get married, to start a family and to start making a life for themselves. Yet they are unable to do so because they cannot set up an independent home because the accommodation, quite simply and frankly, is not available.

Some 7,000 families are on the waiting list for council accommodation. Some 8,500 families are on the transfer list, wishing to move out of one kind of unsuitable accommodation into better accommodation. There are 1,000 families reporting every year to the local authority in my area as homeless under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. That is the scale and condition of the problem.

In those circumstances, I fear that to speak nobly, as the motion does, and as the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) did in moving it, of a right to rent and a right to buy for my constituents is a fanciful chimera. It is nonsense to speak about a right to buy when it costs £50,000 to buy a tiny one-bedroom flat in most of my constituency. To buy any sort of house in my constituency costs at least £100,000. House prices have risen by 19 per cent. in the last 12 months. In those circumstances, to talk about a genuine right to buy for ordinary Islington people is, frankly, nonsense.

[Mr. Chris Smith]

Further, to speak about a genuine right to buy when the Government have consistently refused to give the same privileges to tenants of private sector landlords that they have been keen to give to tenants of public sector landlords, to abjure the possibilities of equity between the private rented sector and the public rented sector, as the Government have consistently done over the past eight years, is not to be even-handed in wanting to give genuine rights to buy to people, whatever their condition or tenure. The Government came up with a wonderful scheme about two and a half years ago for tenants of charitable housing associations. They were going to give lots of money to them to move out of their present rented flats to assist them with the purchase of properties in the private sector. The scheme has virtually run out of money so that that chance is now being denied to many tenants of charitable housing associations. What is more, the great majority of tenants of charitable housing associations in my constituency are tenants of the Samuel Lewis trust, the Sutton trust, the Guinness trust or the Peabody trust and the properties which they occupy were constructed before housing association grant was invented. Therefore, they as tenants are excluded from the provisions of the Housing and Building Control Act 1983 which gives the opportunity to move out to people supposedly in charitable housing accommodation. Therefore, they are denied the right to buy.

When Conservative Members speak about a genuine right to buy for ordinary people in inner city areas they should think rather more carefully about what they are saying because, frankly, the right to buy does not exist in any realistic sense whatever.

The right to rent is the only recourse to the overwhelming majority of people in inner city areas such as Islington. How on earth can we talk about a genuine right to rent when the Government have reduced housing investment programme allocations for areas such as Islington by two thirds in real terms over the past seven years and when they are restricting the amount that local authorities can spend on providing decent rented accommodation through the operation of severe and savage restrictions on the capital receipts which can be used by local authorities to construct new accommodation and to improve existing accommodation?

How on earth can we talk about the genuine right to rent when the estate action programme carried out by the borough of Islington to improve the inter-war estates to make them good and decent places in which to live is being cut back because of Department of the Environment restrictions on the quality of accommodation which can be produced under that programme?

How on earth can a Conservative Member come to the House and talk about the right to rent when those restrictions are being imposed savagely on the opportunities that are available to thousands of my constituents who wish to rent a good, clean, decent, nice place from their local authority and are being denied that opportunity because of the enormous cuts that have been made?

Yes, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must welcome any moves to link the private and the public sector. I should dearly love to see the hundreds of empty properties above the shops owned by the private sector in my constituency brought into good housing use. It is often ideal accommodation for young, single people or some young couples. That could happen if the Government were prepared to take a more suitable line on the use, for example, of partnership funds by local authorities to assist in the renovation of these properties and their subsequent letting to those on enormously long waiting lists. Assistance could be given by a rather more flexible attitude on the part of the district valuer in not derating such properties, which means that there is no incentive for the owners to bring them into genuine use. Many measures could be taken to try to link the private and public sectors in that way, but the Government, I fear, are doing little to encourage that to happen.

There must be partnership between the private and public sectors, but we must not use that partnership between the private and public worlds as a substitute for good, proper and decent fully funded public provision, which is the major form in which regeneration can come to inner city areas, with good housing being provided for those who live within them. I fear that the Government have a tendency to use rhetoric about the private sector as a substitute for real action by the public sector, which has been cut so much over recent years.

I shall refer briefly to two other aspects of inner city life which have not yet been spoken about and were not included in the speech of the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire. The first factor is the sheer scale of poverty among so many in inner city areas. There are so many in my constituency who are entirely dependent on the Department of Health and Social Security for their livelihood, for the money that they receive each week for any shreds of dignity which they are left within their lives. The conditions in which they have to supplicate for that funding from the DHSS are nothing short of appalling.

I have raised before in the House the problems that afflict my constituents when, for example, they go to the Tavistock square office of the DHSS. They have to wait in queues before the doors open. When admitted, they have to wait for hours and sometimes days at a time in grossly overcrowded and inadequate conditions. It is ironic that Dickensian scenes are painted on the walls, so that people can reflect on how little things have changed over the past 100 years. These are the conditions that people have to endure. They are not Dickensian supplicants; they are citizens who are there to secure their rights. The way in which the DHSS treats them, through lack of space, lack of proper facilities and lack of proper funding for its offices that serve the inner city areas, is nothing short of disgraceful. I await, with keen anticipation, the opportunity to read *Hansard* on Monday. I hope that I shall read assurances from the Minister that she will, yet again, bring these problems and issues to the attention of her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Another issue that has not yet been touched upon is the impact of traffic on inner city areas, especially in inner London. The volume of traffic is increasing. There is an increasing number of vehicles and the lorries or juggernauts that pile into areas such as my constituency are increasing in size. They travel along Holloway road, down Upper street, along the Liverpool road, down New North road and along City road.

I fear that the Government have started to make things worse. With the demise of the GLC, they are introducing into the House measures to provide for the trunking of considerable quantities of road in my constituency. These measures, quite rightly, are alarming many residents who

fear that, with no local recourse to protest, the Government in Whitehall could make decisions, because of the trunking of roads—for example, the trunking of Upper street, which runs through the heart of my constituency—to widen roads, which would encourge more traffic to come into the area, which no one in my area wishes to bear.

Of course, there must be essential deliveries and vehicles must have rights of passage, but everything conceivably possible must be done to steer the large lorries and vehicles away from densely packed inner city areas —and widening and trunking roads is not the way to do it. I hope that the Minister will draw the attention of the Secretary of State for Transport to some of the problems and issues that matter so dramatically and deeply to many people living in areas such as Islington.

In all the areas that we have discussed—housing, poverty and the environment in the inner cities—we have from the Government only the rhetoric of care and interest and very little action. My constituents deserve a far better deal from the Government. I long for the day next year when, under a Labour Government, they will get it.

12.35 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): I join hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on his choice of subject and on the way in which he dealt with interventions in his speech.

As someone who lives in an inner city area that is high up the Department of the Environment scale of urban deprivation, I cannot accept what my hon. Friend said about a revival of human life being necessary in the inner cities. Nor do I accept some of his observations suggesting that it is the ambition of all people to live in the suburbs. There are many people who like living in inner cities, who prefer them to other areas and who want to stay where they are.

I accept the definition of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) that inner-city areas, for the purposes of the motion, should include many outer-city areas that suffer from the same problems. I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) nodding, because many areas in London that are not strictly inner city nevertheless suffer the problems that we are discussing.

The perspective of the debate about housing is that generally housing conditions in the inner cities and elsewhere have improved under Governments and councils of all political colours. Housing statistics clearly show that there are more bathrooms, more inside lavatories and much less overcrowding than in the years immediately after the war, and that improvement has continued. However, it might be that that general improvement makes even more unacceptable the bad housing that remains, especially where some of the worst of it has been built during the past 25 years.

As a matter of policy, there is nothing new in the motion; much of it is contained in the 1977 White Paper "Policy for the Inner Cities", which recognised the need for private investment in the inner cities. I am bound to say, as someone living in an inner city area, that at the time the White Paper was very welcome because it made a number of points that had not been obvious in Government policy previously, especially the need for human scale in new developments. The document emphasised, perhaps more than previous Government utterances, the importance of making a more attractive physical environment in inner city areas so that, in general, they would become or remain places where people would live as a matter of choice.

The White Paper stressed also the relationship between inner city problems and the problems of the regions in which the cities were situated. In my maiden speech I called for a review of the regional strategy for the south-east to take account of the changes in population forecasts and the fact that some of the growth areas were taking people away from London in a way that had not been intended. I very much welcome the changes in regional strategic guidance for the south-east made in February this year by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. He plainly contemplates that a larger proportion of development than in the past will go to London and the other urban areas and proportionately less will go elsewhere.

A number of matters should be of priority for the Government in tackling the next phase of the problems of the inner cities. The first is the condition of public housing stock and repairs to council properties. In my constituency I write probably more letters on this subject than on any other. The right of repair, which has recently been introduced, is a welcome innovation. It is nerve-racking for tenants faced with substantial repairs to decide how to use that weapon. Indeed, it may not be an appropriate weapon when serious problems are involved.

It is interesting and important to recognise that councils such as Wandsworth have succeeded with a high level of spending in improving their council estates while not being at all extravagant—in fact, the reverse—in the amounts levied through the rates. The figures are striking. More than £800 on average was spent on each property owned by the Wandsworth borough council whereas the figures in other areas were lower. In some cases, less than £100 —in some areas a derisory amount—was spent.

In the context of public sector housing, the Government should be concerned with the people who live in Bison housing and those who have bought their house from a local authority. Those who remained in the properties as tenants are having expensive strengthening work done, but many of those who bought their home from local authorities are without any form of expert advice of the type given to local authorities and are left in the dark about what they should do. It would be salutary if my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State were to press local authorities to give tenants the best technical information available so that they could arrive at a sensible decision, and to reveal the expertise that has been made available to them.

Enormous progress has been made by the Department of the Environment in public consultation and ascertaining people's views as to the sort of development they want in their areas and the sort of housing that should be provided. Many of the lessons of the past have been learned, but in the provision of open space for leisure and purposes of that sort the level and quality of public consultation is still extremely rudimentary. Many of the provisions being made for leisure are grotesquely unpopular — for example, the expensive provision of a plastic football pitch in a residential area with houses all around. A maximum amount of nuisance and annoyance will be caused to residents who will see an area of green disappear for

[Mr. Patrick Ground]

something visually much less attractive, and they will be faced with the prospect of floodlighting and noise on many evenings of the week.

On matters such as that and the provision of open space there should be a good deal of improvement in consultation and communication between central Government, local authorities and residents. In that way the Government and local authorities would recognise the importance that people attach to better standards of open space provision. In many areas, far from an improvement, there is an erosion of public open space, even in areas where the shortage has been recognised for many years by the Government. I was interested to hear the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) about the provision of open space in London. I certainly hope that the Government will give priority to reversing the indifference which has apparently been shown by the Government and local government on this subject. For example, where substantial erosion of public open space in an inner city area would be caused by a development proposal I would hope that the Minister would not hesitate to call that proposal in. Too often, the Minister refuses to call it in and leaves an inspector to make the decision, as though it is not a matter of environmental importance.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) referred to the provision of private housing in areas which had previously been used for industry and commerce. He agreed with me that the same point arises where commercial and industrial land is taken and used for building public housing. Too often in inner London Governments, of both colours, have been overjoyed at the prospect of any form of development on sites which have been derelict and without a use for some time and have not been sufficiently tenacious in insisting upon an adequate provision of land for industry.

One of the problems in the provision of land for industry throughout the country is that progressively more and more land is required to provide employment. The use of space is very much more generous in terms of the number of employees than in the past. If satisfactory sites for employment are to be provided in inner cities, it requires a strong policy on the part of the planning authorities, insisting that land allocated for industry is, as far as possible, used for that purpose. Where that policy has been followed, in most cases of which I am aware, employment opportunities have arisen, and the land has been satisfactorily developed.

Those are some of the matters that I suggest are of priority. I should like the Department of the Environment also to consider the points systems that are used by local authorities, and to consider whether systems that give priority to people according to the scale of squalor in which they live are necessarily good policies for housing in the inner cities. Too often, there is no incentive for applicants on the council housing list to do what is possible to improve their housing condition. They stand to lose points, to lose their chance of earlier accommodation. That area should be looked at, as well as the extent to which residents who have lived in the area for a long time and their local connections should be considered in the allocation of council housing. I believe that the present system, for good and worthy reasons, places a premium on squalor, which is perhaps not in the best interests of the sensible housing of people in inner cities. It gives less opportunity for people to improve their condition while they are waiting to be housed.

I support what was said by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) about tenants of housing trusts, who have neither the right to buy nor the right to be paid money to be housed elsewhere. A large estate in my consitituency, the Beaver estate, is in that position. Many of the tenants would like to buy, and many would like to move elsewhere and buy property, but, because of the historical quirks of the way in which their estate has been developed, they get neither right. The position of such tenants should be considered by the Government because is seems anomalous that they should not be given at least some of the opportunities that have been given to other tenants.

12.53 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): The motion is curious, because while much of the phrasing is couched in terms which many hon. Members on both sides of the House would find it easy to support, if one looks at the implications of the phrasing it becomes clear that if what it suggests was followed through it would involve a major reversal of the Government's policies.

The most curious thing of all is this. As I listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle), it became clear that he has no intention of instituting the logical policies that flow from the terms of his motion. Instead, he is advocating a strange mismatch of curious and mainly irrelevant measures, which will not have the effect which we in the Labour party seek. We want a serious programme to tackle the undoubted needs of the inner cities.

I should like to explore some of the concepts mentioned in the motion. There is much play with the idea of partnership. Surely partnership involves sharing and a mutual contribution to achieve a more effective response to needs, yet it is abundantly clear that the Conservative philosophy of partnership, in the context of the inner cities and housing, is different. It is a concept of substitution, of substituting private for public initiative. That is what privatisation is all about. It is not about ensuring the most effective contribution of both public and private sectors to achieve the building of more homes, as the figures will show. All that we have seen under this Government is a series of drastic cuts in investment in public sector house building and measures to transfer ownership from the public sector to the private sector. We have not seen a concerted programme to achieve a large output of homes.

The figures are startling. Ten years ago the public sector was starting about 170,000 new homes each year and the private sector was starting about 150,000. Last year, as a result of repeated and serious cuts by the Government, the public sector had been reduced to only 33,000 new starts. That reduction removes options and choices from people who may need public sector rented housing.

There has been hardly any increase in private sector output. About 160,000 new private homes were started last year. That was an increase of 10,000 on the figure of 10 years ago, but in that period there has been a drastic reduction in public sector building and the overall result is a reduction of 100,000 in the number of new homes being built each year. There are fewer homes to meet people's needs.

The picture is much more serious in the worst inner city areas. There were about 25,000 new starts in the public sector in London 10 years ago. Last year the number was just 2,500—one tenth of the previous level. The private sector had achieved an increase, but only from about 5,000 new starts to about 8,000. In London last year there were about 11,000 new starts, compared with 30,000 in 1975.

The Government's policies have resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of new homes, partly because of substitution and partly because of cuts in public sector provision. The result is not an effective partnership to achieve more, but a reduction in the public sector's ability to contribute.

The motion refers to

"the right to buy and the right to rent".

Most Opposition Members strongly agree with that concept, but the Government clearly do not agree with it, because they have limited the right to buy to council tenants. They do not advocate a right to buy for private tenants, yet many of those tenants live in the worst areas of exploitation.

Thousands of private tenants in my constituency would dearly love to buy their homes from bad landlords who do not maintain them, often charge extortionate rents and are often guilty of the most disgraceful neglect of the welfare and interests of their tenants, but those tenants are not afforded the right to buy and are afforded no protection. Their interests are ignored. The Government have a one-sided policy. They are interested solely in substituting private property for public housing.

The right to rent is a cruel illusion under the Government's policies. One million or more households on council waiting lists have no prospect of obtaining a rented home because of the shortage of available lets. Homelessness has reached record levels. Nearly 100,000 households were accepted as the responsibility of local authorities last year, because they could not find anywhere to live. Many of them had to be put into dreadful bed-and-breakfast accommodation, in poor conditions and at vast cost to the public purse.

Mr. Rowe: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, for comprehensible reasons, successive Governments have loaded private landlords with many restrictions and that that is a major factor in the non-availability of rented accommodation?

Mr. Raynsford: I ask the hon. Gentleman to be patient, because I intend to tackle that subject later.

Council houses are not the only properties in the public sector. Housing associations have been able to make an important contribution in recent years to meet the needs of the poorer sections of inner city populations who need rented housing. Yet this important contribution from housing associations has been the victim of cuts in Government expenditure. As a result of the reduction in funding available to local authorities to support housing associations, and because of restrictions on the budget available to the Housing Corporation, there has been a dramatic reduction — especially in London — in the contribution that housing associations have made through rehabilitating older homes. In 1976-77 about 12,300 homes were rehabilitated by housing associations in London. In 1984-85, the last year for which figures are available, that number had fallen to 5,700. I am certain that the 1985-86 figures will be lower, but the final figures are not yet available.

There has been a dramatic reduction in the number of homes available to rent. That makes nonsense of the rhetoric from the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire about providing the right to rent. The right to rent requires choice, and it requires options and homes being available to rent. It is clear that those homes are not available in sufficient numbers through the local authority sector and housing associations.

I do not wish to say too much about the private rented sector, except to stress that its decline has been a continuing feature of housing policy for the past 80 years. It has continued irrespective of whether landlords have had more or less freedom to evict their tenants. The Rent Act 1957 reduced the security that some tenants enjoyed. It was followed by an increase in the number of evictions and became associated with the era of Rachmanism. The private rented sector declined even faster than it had previously. There is no evidence to support the thesis that providing options for landlords to rent without restrictions on security will increase the private rented sector. That was an illusion which the Conservative party included in its rhetoric before 1979, and which some people may have believed to be possible.

Mr. Rowe *rose*——

Mr. Raynsford: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman. I have little time left.

Mr. Ground: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will give way to me.

Mr. Raynsford: Yes.

Mr. Ground: If the hon. Gentleman is dealing solely with the increase in the private sector, which might or might not be caused by those factors, why does he not also consider the possibility that the decline in the rented sector might be slower if there were more incentives to the private landlord to rent?

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful for that contribution, because the evidence reveals the strength of my case. The Conservative Government elected in 1979 moved rapidly, in the Housing Act 1980, to introduce shorthold tenancies, assuring us that this would lead to an increase in the number of lettings. However, the figures for London for the year after the introduction of the Act are illuminating. That year, about 16,000 lettings were withdrawn from the market. That was consistent with the decline in the private rented market in previous years. Only 300 shortholds were created, which is a measure of how ineffective and irrelevant the concept of shorthold tenancies was to the provision of rented housing.

There is an economic mismatch between the amount of money that a landlord can reasonably expect to receive from his investment in private property and the amount that ordinary people seeking rented housing can afford to pay. That economic mismatch is at the heart of the decline of the private rented market, and no amount of shuffling round with security of tenure will change that. The private rented market, in its old form, is doomed and will continue to decline. Parliament's responsibility should be to ensure that the decline is offset by the provision of housing for rent to meet the needs of those who cannot afford to buy. The only agencies capable of providing it properly are local authorities and housing associations, and they should be encouraged.

[Mr. Raynsford]

The Labour party is in favour of the right to rent, and it was responsible for an amendment to the Housing and Planning Bill which would have gone some way along the route advocated by the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire in providing the right-to-rent accommodation left needlessly empty by local authorities. It is curious that he should have advocated that, when the Government opposed the amendment which we tabled less than a month ago. That is a measure of the inconsistency that is creeping into the Conservative party. If we are to achieve the right to rent, it must be on the basis of an adequate supply of lettings and an adequate choice. That is manifestly absent now. We need more investment and the provision of homes by local authorities and housing associations to meet the need.

The third issue that I want to mention is one of the most tragic that afflicts us—the rise in homelessness. It has continued from the late 1950s. It has not been caused, as the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire suggested, by the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, which commanded the support of reasonable hon. Members on both sides of the House and which sought to alleviate some of the disastrous consequences of the continuing rise in homelessness. Sadly, the rise has continued.

To discover the causes of the rise, we do not need to go much further than an excellent study carried out by Professor John Greve in 1970, which considered homelessness in London. He identified three major causes of homelessness: first, eviction by private landlords; secondly, domestic friction involving marriage breakdown or people having to leave parental homes because they could no longer stay there; and, thirdly, the shortage of accommodation, which prevented people from finding homes of their own.

Those three reasons are still fundamentally the causes of homelessness today, but a fourth has come increasingly into prominence. It is the breakdown of mortgage arrangements when people no longer have the means to pay their mortgage. The problem has been highlighted by the huge surge in the number of mortgage accounts in serious arrears in the past few years, rising to unprecedented levels. Figures show that one in 10 of all people who are accepted as homeless in England are homeless because they have been unable to keep their mortgage payments going.

It is against that background that last night's announcement by the Minister for Social Security is so profoundly depressing and deplorable. In view of the rising risk of homelessness because people are unable to meet their mortgages, what is surely needed is a policy that will help them to cope, not one that will punish them by reducing their entitlement to supplementary benefit to help meet their needs.

It is a curious comment that, once again—we have seen it all too often in the past seven years—housing policy is being affected by snap decisions being taken by other Departments, in this case the Department of Health and Social Security, purely to achieve a saving. There is no logical policy basis for cutting supplementary benefit help for people in difficulty with their mortgage payments. It is necessary to give that help, but it is being cut because the DHSS is trying to trim its budget, just as housing benefit has been cut for the same reason. Rent arrears are being exacerbated by DHSS decisions, and now homelessness will be, just as happened as a result of that cruel attack on board-and-lodging payments to young single people last year and again this year. The DHSS has promoted and caused homelessness.

That is a sad comment on the state of housing policy and the increase in homelessness. Perhaps saddest of all is the evidence of lack of movement by the Government to deal with it. I should like to focus on the implications of a recent House of Lords judgment involving a family called Pulhofter. The judgment included the bizarre suggestion by one of the Lords that the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 was not about housing the homeless. It would require a fairly lengthy exploration of the archives of Byzantium to find a more curious concept. The result of that judgment is that the rights available to homeless people have been seriously eroded. Many more are likely to be refused accommodation by local authorities and, as a result, will be left on the streets, swelling the army of people who are homeless and disaffected.

What is urgently needed, as is stressed in early-day motion 855, which is supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House, is action by the Government to deal with the problem of that judgment, to amend the Act to secure the rights of homeless people and to avoid abuse of the loophole which the Lords created which means that some local authorities do not need to implement the 1977 Act.

Instead of a positive response, we have no action at all. I have heard recently that an approach by voluntary organisations seeking a meeting with the Minister has been rejected. That is evidence of an unwillingness to tackle one of the crying needs of our time.

Although the motion raises a number of interesting concepts, it serves only to highlight the inconsistency and hollowness of Government policy. If the needs of the inner cities are to be properly met, we need an active investment programme which will provide the homes that are at present needed, make a reality of the right to rent, which is otherwise purely hollow rhetoric, and provide options for people who will otherwise become homeless.

1.9 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): It may seem strange for an hon. Member from a constituency such as mine to participate in this debate, but I have had an interest in this subject since I was concerned with the community development projects run by the Home Office many years ago. I should also like to correct the impression that mine is essentially a rural seat. It is an urban seat with a small rural part. Chatham is one of the Medway towns which are some of the most densely populated areas of Kent.

The debate has been interesting and has demonstrated a polarisation of attitude. That is entirely understandable. If I were faced daily with the number of people in misery as so many Opposition Members who have spoken are, and with the victims of the worst forms of abuse by landlords and other denizens of the inner cities, I would naturally believe that the solution was simply a massive injection of resources. I would think "Here is the need. Why do we not simply meet it by pumping in resources?"

Resources are indispensable, but so is excellence in their deployment. I shall give an example from an area in which I have been working recently. I do not believe that there is a director of social services in the country who could not make a case that would convince nearly all of us that his or her department should have more social

workers and ancillary staff. The inspectorate has said that in the vast majority of social work departments there is little or no supervision of the basic grade field worker. In other words, there would be no guarantee that more resources pumped into social services departments would achieve any of the objectives sought by the director.

We are living in a substantially pauperised society with some 14 million people dependent in whole or in part for their incomes on means-tested benefits. One third of those who go out to work do so to bring home a net gain of £25 a week or less over what they could get if they were on benefit. That is a horrific figure. Moreover, that balance would not require a great deal of tilting for a large number of those estimable people, who choose to work rather than to stay at home and do nearly as well for nothing, to stay at home. If that happened, the problems facing society, whether in the inner cities or outside them, would become almost unmanageable.

All hon. Members must ask themselves whether the injection of resources, which must be paid for by those in work and those providing employment, would do anything to help the problem. This is one of the reasons that has impelled the Government to put their proposal about mortgage repayments to the Social Services Advisory Committee. I hasten to say that this is a proposal that has not yet been agreed. I am one of those who will be suggesting to my right hon. Friends that a better way to deal with the problem of an equity gain from a mortgage on which the public sector is meeting the repayment would not be to cut mortgage repayments at the beginning but rather to lay some claim to the appreciation in the value of the property pro rata for the contribution that the public sector has made to it later on, and not when people are at their most despairing.

Successive Governments have pumped money into the inner city and have contributed to its pauperisation. The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) will know better than I that great essay on housing by Professor Donnison, in which he pointed out that since the war every Government have achieved exactly the opposite effect in their housing legislation to that which they set out to achieve. This is not an easy matter to resolve. One of the consequences of the way in which we have proceeded in recent years is that we have destroyed a balanced community.

Some years ago, I went to talk to the Labour leader of one of the inner London boroughs. He told me that he was desperate to achieve a mix of housing in his borough but because a number of young idealists had taken possession of his council and believed passionately that the people who had the right to the first and best houses to be built were the poorest members of the borough, he was unable to build houses that he could either have let or sold to people on above average incomes. Both sides of that debate are respectable sides to hold, but the consequence of one-class housing over large stretches of the inner city is that everybody ends up impoverished.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) referred to the Church's report "Faith in the City", a report that I greatly welcomed. However, one of the least attractive sentences was that which expressed, with some surprise, that the members of the committee had found a large number of intelligent people in the inner cities. There is a terrible danger of enormously under-rating the people who live, often against great odds, within the inner city. I cannot agree more with my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), who urged upon local authorities and others that we should give much more power and control to the people who live there.

One of the effects of pumping public money into the inner city has been to establish hugely expensive bureaucracies run by people who pull the salaries that ensure that they no longer continue to live in the areas for which they express so much public concern. A great proportion of that money might be better spent by people in the area. We need to encourage personal responsibility within the people who live in inner cities. Often enough, they are only too glad to take it if they are given some assistance and some assurance that, if they do so, they will get the rewards.

I can give an example. The gentleman who had most to do with rehabilitating the Watts suburb after the riots in Los Angeles came over here, and one day saw a young lad playing pool in a youth centre at 11 o'clock in the morning. "What are you doing?" he asked, to which the lad replied, not unreasonably, "I am playing pool." "It is 11 o'clock in the morning. Why are you playing pool, which is a leisure pursuit?", asked the man. The young lad said, "Because I have nothing else to do." The man asked him, "Is this your youth centre?" "Yes", said the young lad. So he was asked, "How can you say that you have nothing whatever to do when the windows of this youth centre are filthy and when the floor is covered with rubbish?" We feel that our function is discharged if we provide facilities, but thereby we deprive those who use them of a sense of responsibility. If the facilities belonged to them, they would play a much larger part in their management and maintenance.

Having referred to some of the problems, may I suggest a few possible remedies. The Government should offer a guarantee of employment to those who have been unemployed for more than three years. It would have to be worthwhile employment that provided more money than people can get when they are on the dole. I am unable to define it more closely than that, although I have a few ideas about it which I share with some of my colleagues on the Select Committee on Employment. That would change the nature of our inner city problems. One of the inner city problems, thanks to the beneficence of previous Governments who have thrown money into the attempt to lure companies away from the inner cities and put them on green field sites, together with their skilled workers, is that now we have a population in the inner cities which is substantially without skills. There is, therefore, a tremendous need for training.

Local authorities should sell off, by means of a mortgage equity arrangement, some of their community facilities to groups of people who live in the area, who could manage those facilities and thereby share in the equity. As they made profits, they could take a larger share of the mortgage equity. The Treasury succeeded in destroying a most important incentive. Local authorities were encouraged to sell council houses but the Treasury refused to allow them to spend that money. The Treasury failed, but the Department of Health and Social Security did not fail. It allowed the district health authorities to spend the money that they saved from closing hospitals and selling off unwanted land. The inner cities should be allowed to do the same.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) that we should encourage people to set up co-operatives and tender for the right to carry out some

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

of the functions that are now performed by local authorities. Co-operatives to provide home helps and similar functions would be very useful.

The worst feature of polarisation to which I referred at the beginning of my speech is the unwillingness of so many inner city local authorities to consult their business communities. The Government have made it obligatory for local authorities to consult the business community before they set a rate. However, I hear tales from all over the country of the extraordinary unwillingness of local authorities to set up a reasonable consultation procedure. If local authorities will not consult their business communities they will remain alienated, the rates will increase to an unreasonable level and more and more of those employers will leave.

I end on a well-reported anecdote. Some years ago, the mayor of one of the towns in New York State discovered that businesses were pulling out of his town to such an extent that it was bumping up the unemployment rate. He asked one or two of the companies why they were leaving. They told him that they were very happy where they were but that they had looked ahead and foresaw that in four, five or 10 years' time they would be unable to survive as easily there as they would be if they moved to, say, San Francisco. He then called together all the businesses in his patch and asked them what sort of facilities they saw themselves requiring in three, four or five years' time. As a consequence of being able to do some joint planning of that kind, he not only managed to retain businesses but to secure new ones.

If we are to talk about partnership in the inner cities, we must get away from the suggestion that the private employer is somehow there to grind the faces of the poor. Rather he is there creating the only sources of revenue which can sustain the inner cities. We must make sure that the consultations that take place between private business, local authorities, Government and everyone else concerned with the inner city are constructive, creative and forward-looking, not defensive and polarised.

1.25 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and I have sat through most of this interesting and important debate. Unfortunately, we have only five minutes left to share between us.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on having introduced the debate, because it gives us the opportunity to discuss a matter of national concern. It has highlighted just how badly divided Britain is today; how dangerously divided our nation has become.

The divisions that we often talk about between the north and the south are apparent. We talk about the relative prosperity of the south as opposed to the high unemployment-blighted areas of the north. It is a division that is not precise, but it is one that we recognise.

There are also the divisions within the inner cities. The great divisions in London are there and are available for all to see. Such extremes of poverty and wealth within London are dramatic and they represent a source of potential conflict within our capital city which we ignore at our peril.

This has essentially been a debate about housing. It should have been an economic debate from the beginning. The problems of the inner city arise essentially out of Britain's economic malaise. They are, at base, economic problems. We see in massive unemployment, high real interest rates, a record number of bankruptcies, a record balance of payments deficit on manufactured goods and the steady destruction of much of Britain's manufacturing base, the problems of the inner city. It is in the inner cities that the consequences of the economic folly of monetarism is seen in all its horrid forms.

I shall be holding my advice surgery tomorrow morning in the London borough of Newham, the second most deprived local authority area in Britain, according to the Department of the Environment's statistics. As the hon. and learned Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) said, out of the first 20 most deprived local authority areas in the country, 10 are in London, and three of those are in east London. That is real poverty. That is real deprivation. It is about no jobs and no hope. It is about living in a society whose youth are surrounded by all the trappings of a consumer society. Our young people are bombarded with consumer goods which they can get if they have the wherewithal to achieve them, but of course they have not, because they have neither the jobs nor the prospects of the jobs. It is little wonder that many of them reach out and grab those goodies. That is why in the inner cities we have seen such dramatic increases in street crimes, drug pushing, prostitution and all the other problems. They arise out of the economic malaise which Britain in now experiencing.

Conservative Members talk about the destruction of the community, but this Government have done more than any other Government since the war to destroy the values of the community. They are a Government based on institutionalised greed and selfishness and the devil take the hindmost. That is the Government's economic and social philosophy. They talk about not being able to solve problems by throwing money at them. I tell the Minister that problems cannot be solved by taking money away, and London has lost about £4 billion in rate support grant since the Government were first elected in 1979. That is where the problems of the inner cities start. They start with the rotten economic values of this Government. Until we get rid of the Government, we shall never get rid of the problems of the inner city.

1.30 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is ironic that I seem to have rather less than a couple of minutes in which to speak about the inner city area which I represent, which has suffered enormous deprivation and high levels of unemployment for many decades.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was correct when he said that the problems are economic ones. The inner city area which I represent has an elected local authority which is hamstrung by the Government. The local authority can attempt to alleviate the serious housing and social service problems of the people of Islington, but it has virtually no control over the industrial life of the borough, and it has no control over the borough's economy. It can provide and develop services, but it cannot develop the economy within the area, because it has no control over it. A process of deregulation, cut and closure and the giving of unfettered life to capitalism in inner-city areas makes the problems of inner-city deprivation worse instead of solving them.

If anyone wishes to see the ultimate in setting capitalism free in London, let him go to the Wapping print plant, which has been constructed in a rate-free and tax-free haven by a foreign multinational entrepreneur. The purpose is to destroy the jobs of print workers and the public are forced to pay for the police force to suppress those who are trying to get their jobs back in that plant. If Conservative Members believe in free speech, why do they try to muzzle every local authority which speaks up about deprivation in its area?

Another aspect of inner city deprivation is the Health Service, and a curious phenomenon is the growth of commercial private medicine. I have an excellent book, which was produced by the Greater London council before it was tragically abolished, entitled, "Commercial Medicine in London". It tells of the so-called freedom of choice for the people of London. Apparently they can choose to queue at their hospital for a hip replacement operation, or any other fairly routine operation, and wait two years before it is carried out, or pay to go into a private hospital in Harley street. The choice is a non-existent one. My constituents do not have that freedom of choice and they have to queue.

It seems that the message is getting through to the Government that the people of London are fed up with the way in which their Health Service has been treated. That is why the Minister for Health wrote his curious and weasel-worded letter of 7 April to the chairman of the London group of Tory MPs claiming that there had been an increase in Health Service expenditure in London and listed a number of new hospitals that had been constructed. He wrote:

"The suggestion that the changes now taking place will mean a general decline in services for Londoners is not justified by the facts. The Health Service is making increasingly efficient use of the funds available because of the improvements in treatment techniques and the increased use of day surgery."

I do not know when the Minister last went to a London hospital or examined the curious way in which the efficiency of the Health Service is examined, which means that the through-put of patients is the sole arbiter of whether a hospital is efficient. If the patient visits a hospital several times because he has been released too soon after an operation, that is often ignored. Early release is regarded as an increase in efficiency, when it is the very opposite.

A series of figures have been produced by an excellent organisation called London Health Emergency, which was established with GLC support. It states:

"Barney Hayhoe speaks only of particular examples of new projects, claiming increases in spending. He leaves out the fact that overall health spending in London's 30 health districts has been cut by over £70 million since 1982 with a loss of 1,876 beds in 1984 alone and with well over 5,000 jobs cut."

The document lists the new buildings in various district health authorities. It is certainly true that new hospitals are being built, and, for example, the development of Islington's Whittington hospital is very welcome. We want a decent, good hospital on that site. What we do not want, however, is the closure of Friern Barnet or neighbouring hospitals, which would take away that advantage, or the cut of 69 beds and the loss of 278 jobs that has occurred since 1983.

The issue of health care in London appears to be haunting the Tories. It certainly haunted them in the local election campaign, and it will continue to haunt them. Is the Minister satisfied that the RAWP formula does anything but bleed the inner-urban areas of London dry of Health Service resources? Does she not now accept the need for a democratic London health authority? Does she not also accept that there is something quite evil about a proposal to close a hospital such as St. Thomas's for one month in August, or the Middlesex, which was closed last Christmas, simply to make up the shortfall in expenditure?

Each time regional health authorities try to bail out a health authority to stop it closing a hospital temporarily, that means that another health authority cannot be bailed out. What we need is a London health authority, with a massive injection of capital, so that we can provide the Health Service that is needed. Above all, we need an end to the parasite and the cancer that is private medicine in London, private pay beds in NHS hospitals and privatisation of NHS resources to line the pockets of a bunch of scroungers who are trying to live off the NHS and bleed it dry.

1.36 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I congratulate the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on his luck in the ballot and on initiating what has been a thoughtful, if hard-hitting, debate.

I wish to define what I see as the inner-city problem. The problem in Tyneside is different from that in Liverpool, as it is from that in Lambeth or in Islington. There are distinguishing features as between one inner-city area and another, and we do well to recognise that.

Having said that, the inner-city problem is a concentration in urban areas of a number of problems—what the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) called a density of deprivation. Central to those problems is poverty, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) pointed out and as the Archbishop of Canterbury's report underlined.

That poverty is coupled with wholly unacceptable levels of unemployment—typically about 25 per cent. male unemployment. I use the figure for male unemployment because it is often a truer reflection than the level of female unemployment. There are even higher levels in limited areas. It is by no means unusual to be told in inner-city constituencies that unemployment has reached 70 or 80 per cent. in small, limited areas. Neither is it unusual to be told that unemployment among school leavers is as high as 50 per cent.—even 70 per cent. among certain ethnic groups. In my borough there are 3,000 unemployed school and college leavers who have never known the experience of work.

The problem is characterised by inadequate housing, long waiting lists, unacceptable levels of homelessness and, of course, the contradiction in many areas of an acute shortage of housing at the same time as we have the phenomenon of a large number of local authority dwellings that are classified as being hard to let.

The problem is also distinguished by an unstable population, family breakdown, poor health, low levels of appropriate skills and, increasingly, an educational under-achievement as the hopelessness outside the school begins to creep into the school itself and devalue the courses.

We often find different racial and cultural traditions, the absence of a common set of values and the presence of a different set of perceptions about discrimination and how people are treated, which does not make it any easier to solve the problems.

[Mr. John Fraser]

Too often, the inner city exhibits high levels of personal crime, such as burglaries, robberies and even murders, as well as drug and alcohol abuse and other forms of anti-social behaviour. Often there is antagonism between the police and sections of the community. Indeed, virtually every riot has been sparked off by a clash with the police, and usually a rescue from arrest. I am sorry to say that that phenomenon has occurred this spring.

Of course, all those elements exist in other parts of the country but the combustible nature of the inner cities, which burst into flames in the 1981 and 1985 riots, appears to be a function of the size of the cities as well as a constituent element of them. What happens in Lichfield will not happen in Liverpool, and vice versa. Size has something to do with the combustible nature of our inner-city problems.

I am worried that, as well as the dangers and deprivations of the inner cities, there is evidence that they are beginning to create their own momentum of new traditions and new patterns of accommodation to violence. The patterns are becoming more deeply entrenched as people begin to have to get used to a life without any reasonable possibility of wealth or work. One then gets to the stage when the character of the environment is determined by people as much as, according to the old theories, the character of people was determined by their environment. The facts create notoriety and then the notoriety begins to create fresh facts.

I shall cite an example from my constituency, but I have come across such cases in Manchester and elsewhere as well. Because of levels of crime and disorder, it becomes extremely difficult for some business people to obtain insurance. Without insurance, it is impossible to start or to continue a business. The original causes of criminal behaviour, which make it difficult to obtain insurance, lie in poverty and unemployment, but, as fewer people are able to obtain insurance and start new or maintain old businesses, the problem of unemployment and poverty becomes even that little bit more acute. That is just one example of the way in which the inner city can create its own negative momentum.

Every measure of inner-city deprivation is worsening, and not by accident—in many cases, because of the Government's deliberate action. The difference between 1979 and 1986 is that in 1979 there was hope. I had the feeling in my inner-city constituency that we were beginning to turn the corner—housing was improving and there was a hope that people would get jobs. However, since 1979, a different economic climate has made it much more difficult to solve inner-city problems.

When the Conservative party took office, unemployment in Lambeth was 7,000; by the riots in 1981 it had doubled; and, since then, it has doubled again. Between 1979 and 1986 unemployment has increased fourfold. In most inner-city areas, crime has escalated by two or three times the national level. This week, we read in our newspapers that the Conservative party, which at its last conference committed itself to more policemen on the streets and more resources to deal with crime, is cash limiting the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis in the same way as it cash limits Socialist town halls.

If unemployment and crime have soared, housing has nose-dived, leading to a doubling of levels of homelessness. Typically, the amount of money that local authorities may spend on housing, by means of their own housing and by improvement grants, has dropped by two thirds. The burdens, frustrations and tensions have been heaped on those who already bear more than their fair share of suffering.

Changes in housing benefit regulations have introduced new tensions between young people and their parents. The DHSS changes in board and lodging allowance have created the feeling that there is a vendetta against the young, who already have a great burden to carry. Increases in fares have made it more difficult for those who work to travel out of their areas. The Government's marathon battle against the teachers has done nothing to improve morale in our schools, which are feeling the backlash of the hopelessness of unemployment for many youths. I agree that owner-occupation is to be encouraged, but the latest announcement about the safety net for owner-occupiers will not help.

Until this year, rate support grant has been cut and rates have risen as a direct consequence of Government action. For example, six years ago Hackney had a rate support grant of £69 million. By last year that figure had dropped to £37 million, a cut of £32 million. The only compensation for Hackney was a £3·5 million increase in the urban programme, compared to a total loss of £65 million in rate support grant, housing subsidy and housing investment allocations. I do not think that the people of Hackney would say that one of their problems is that money has been thrown at them—quite the reverse.

Health care has suffered. In my constituency, King's College hospital is the biggest employer. It is our only major industry. Although that should be playing a significant part in inner city partnership policy, and we are told that the Ministers are all working together, I read in the *London Standard* this week that there is a "horrific situation" for National Health care in the hospital. The hospital says that it has a 110 per cent. occupancy of beds, which means that as one patient leaves another one takes the bed on the same day.

"On many occasions a patient has stood in the corridor outside the ward waiting for a nurse to change bed linen which is still warm from the last patient, so that he or she can then take that bed."

A consultant has been quoted as saying:

"Recently I had to turn away a coronary patient because we just had no bed available—and that patient died. The effects on the health service are immeasurable and the future will be awful."

There is a possibility that the neighbouring hospital of St. Thomas's may be closed for a large part of the year because of cuts.

We have two Government Departments which could be making a contribution to the inner cities. One could run through a great catalogue of Government action which has deeply intensified the distress, poverty and frustration of the inner city. The Government have penalised not only the people of the inner cities but their representatives, as in Lambeth and Liverpool.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I have never argued that the Government do not care or that there have not been some responses to the challenge of the inner city. However, we say that their responses have been token—tranquillisers—and, in some cases, they have been gimmicks and wholly inadequate to meet the scale of the problem. The problems that have been imposed on the inner cities have far outweighed any of the advantages brought their way.

The argument that money has been thrown at the inner cities and has failed is simply not true. If one takes the total of current initiatives—urban regeneration grant, special employment initiatives and urban development grants—they do not add up to anything like the amount of money the Government have been prepared to put into one City bank, Johnson Matthey Bankers. The Government believe that the problems of the financial City deserve much more money than the problems of the inner city.

The responses to the riots in Brixton and Birmingham last year have been virtually non-existent in any positive sense and negative in that the resources which would have been made available to inner city areas have been diminished in London by the abolition of the Greater London council and the beggaring of thousands of voluntary groups, and in Birmingham the Government have been resisting the legal rights of Birmingham city council to resources under rate support grant. I warn the Government that the smouldering volcanoes of our inner cities remain just as dangerous this year as last year. I do not think that the Government have the correct perception as to the extent to which the cities could explode again. I hope that that does not happen because it does more damage than anything else I can think of in my area. However, the risk remains and the response to the problems of last year has been minimal.

Throughout the debate we have heard that money has been thrown at the inner cities. I want to refute that by giving a few figures. Firstly, I shall give the figures of an urban authority outside London—Newcastle upon Tyne—and compare the figures of 1981-82 with 1985-86. I am using constant 1985-86 prices. In 1981-82, Newcastle upon Tyne received rate support grant of £60 million. By last year, it had been reduced by £40 million, a reduction of 67 per cent. If one takes 12 urban authorities outside London, ranging from Birmingham to Sunderland, one sees that in total, between 1981-82 and 1985-86, those authorities lost £387 million in rate support grant, a cut of 30 per cent., which is not made up for by any inner city money. Tower Hamlets in London had £33 million of rate support grant in 1981-82. Last year it amounted to £18 million, a cut of 44 per cent. over the four years from 1981-82. Whichever local authority one looks at, one sees that nowhere have local authorities been compensated by increases in inner city partnership or programme money.

Let us take the total of all the partnership and programme authorities. In current values, the loss of block grant from 1981-82 to 1985-86 has represented a reduction of £427 million, compensated for by an increase in urban programme allocations of only £39 million. That utterly refutes the argument that money is being thrown at those places, or that they are awash with Government largesse. It is simply not true.

Coupled with that is something that affects the inner city badly, which one cannot exactly measure—the cut in purchasing power of the people who live there. That cut has come from increased taxation on the poor, increased rates, and falling employment. It is interesting to canvass in my constituency and the Fulham constituency, and to see the difference that high purchasing power makes in different areas. In my area, shops are rundown and there are problems in secondary shopping areas. In Fulham, because of the greater purchasing power that exists there, there is an entirely different pattern, with the development of property and the use of commercial and residential property. Therefore, there is no truth in the notion that money is being thrown at those areas and is making the problem worse.

What can we do to rescue the inner city?

Mr. Tony Banks: Get rid of the Tories.

Mr. Fraser: That is absolutely right. There is not a single measure of net improvement in the condition of the inner city to which the Government can point over seven years. They may talk about individual advances, but in total no net gain can be demonstrated by the Government.

First, we must recognise the massive scale of the problem, which has grown so quickly over these seven Tory years, and that in most cases the solution to the problem lies not only with individuals. There has to be an urban policy that comprises a comprehensive, co-ordinated attack on the web of interlocking factors that affect urban residents.

Mr. Heddle: What the hon. Gentleman is saying is echoed by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). He is devaluing the currency of the debate if that is what he is telling the House. Is he saying that the inner city problem started on 3 May 1979? Did it not exist when he was a Front Bench spokesman in the Government between 1974 and 1979? Did it not exist after the war, when perhaps he was a member of the Labour League of Youth?

Mr. Fraser: Of course, the problem existed during the period of that Labour Government. I had the privilege of serving on the Cabinet Committee that put together the 1977 White Paper on the inner cities. The difference is this. In 1979, there was hope, and in 1986 there is despair, because we are living in an entirely different economic environment. I do not say that the Government do not care and that the problem has been created in the past seven years, but I say that the possibility of curing the problem is immeasurably less now than when the Labour party left office.

The Government must adopt a single, coherent, co-ordinated strategy for each inner city area; the strategy will differ from one area to another. There must be a corporate urban strategy. It is no good the Manpower Services Commission opening a new training facility in Deptford when the DHSS is closing a hospital there. Of course, often we find the MSC closing a training facility and the DHSS closing a hospital.

It is no good the Department of the Environment agreeing to an urban programme and then penalising a local authority for its 25 per cent. contribution to the programme. It is no good the Department saying that a project has been a success and then penalising the local authority because the project goes into its main programme. It is no good giving money to a local authority to put down pink paving stones, which I have seen in Lambeth, Southwark and Sunderland, and denying the authority money to put slates on the roofs of the houses that adjoin the road where the environmental improvements are being made.

It is no good talking about industrial regeneration in Birmingham when the Department of Education and Science slaughters facilities at Aston university, which was a generator of industrial innovation. There was a chance of a partnership with that university and there are

[Mr. Fraser]

chances of partnerships between polytechnics and local authorities to regenerate industry, but the DES is closing establishments that stimulate new industrial ideas.

The contradictions of Government policy are legion and we must have a meaningful, coherent, corporate strategy from the Government, led by a single Minister. We are not even sure who is in charge. Sometimes we think that it is the Chancellor of the Exchequer; sometimes we are told that it is the Secretary of State for Employment; sometimes we think that it is the Secretary of State for the Environment. No one is really sure who is taking the lead.

The Government must also cut out the gimmicks. For example, it is no good the Government telling us that privatisation of council properties in inner cities will make the slightest contribution to solving the overall housing problem. With privatisation, the Government solve the problem of the property without solving the problem of the people.

Privatisation schemes in inner cities do not lead to the comprehensive housing of which the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) spoke. They lead to more ghettoisation as those who are unable to buy homes are squeezed into denser blocks of ghettoised and residualised flats. It is not the change in tenure that matters, but the change in conditions.

At local level, partnership remains the best approach. The partners will be not merely central and local government, but the professions, voluntary and community groups, trade unions and commerce and industry. Each partner needs to recognise its strengths and weaknesses. For example, local authorities are not always best equipped to make decisions on investment and business, any more than businesses are best equipped to make decisions about projects and their social consequences. People must work together and recognise the contributions that each can make. Architects and town planners have strengths, but they also have weaknesses and they can discover their weaknesses by going into partnership with community groups and those who will occupy the houses, estates and environments that the professions are designing.

In some cases inner city renewal agencies may be the least bureaucratic and the most effective instrument of change. That is certainly true of the Greater London Enterprise Board, but the agencies must take local government with them and not bypass local councils.

We must have clarity in our objectives and ask what particular expenditure is intended to achieve. I say to Labour authorities as well as to the Government that we must not be afraid to monitor value for money and the proper conduct of agencies, whether public, private or voluntary, that use funds that are supposed to regenerate the inner city. Of course, we must take chances. Excessive caution in spending on new initiatives would be silly, but we must not be afraid to evaluate expenditure and to monitor performance.

I am in favour of the state principle — the idea of putting money into regenerating the inner cities, which would allow them to generate their own resources. In some cases, the resources could be provided by industry and commerce. In other cases, they will come from private money, perhaps from voluntary organisations. In the most impoverished areas, the only resources available will be commitment and effort. I am a great believer in the principle of people putting a stake and commitment into the inner cities by forming businesses, committing themselves and risking their futures as well as public money. That is the sort of partnership and commitment that we need.

The Scarman reforms must continue. It is a great pity — a judge observed this recently — that racial discrimination is not a reason for dismissal. There must be a more imaginative approach to recruiting black people into the police force. I do not question the fact that there is a commitment in principle, but the Metropolitan police must consider the success of the GLC and boroughs such as Lambeth in recruiting from the racial minorities. The Metropolitan police should also consider the successful approach adopted in the United States. It is not good enough to have a police force that does not reflect the general racial composition of the population that it serves.

All hon. Members would agree that poverty and unemployment are the most haunting spirits in the inner cities. We cannot cure the problem by removing money from the inner cities, but I also agree that we cannot cure all problems by expenditure. We must examine the patterns of behaviour which are a cause as well as a consequence of inner-city problems, and we must develop a policy that helps favourable patterns of behaviour in the inner cities. Sometimes it can be done through sport, leisure or the arts. People develop a pride in what they can achieve for themselves in the arts or sport. It is even more important when there is mass unemployment. Sometimes it can be done through co-operatives, tenants' organisations, clubs and societies.

We must invest people with a sense of achievement, dignity and self-respect and the feeling that they are, in practice as well as in theory, governing themselves. There is a destructive streak in our inner cities, but people destroy that which they do not believe is theirs. If they believe that it is theirs—if there is a stake, commitment or involvement — they are much less likely to be destructive and will want to preserve their environment.

It is terribly important to create small businesses. Lambeth is often reviled, but the council has used much urban aid money to support 1,000 new businesses, many involving black business men and workers. Some will fail and fall off the log, but the successful businesses will have a greater stake in the local community.

One of the worst problems of the inner city is that not only do people know that their conditions are bad, but they believe they have little ability to control them. If we are to develop a new coherent set of values in the inner city, and develop the visionary fervour of William Blake, that fervour and those values must grow from the people themselves. They cannot be imposed.

There is a contradiction that, despite the unpleasantness and bad conditions of life in the inner city, it is often vibrant. One problem of my area is not that people want to move out, but that they want to move in. There must be values and a belief in the inner city. We must get people to believe that they can create a new Jerusalem in Liverpool, Manchester and London. I shall work for that. A combination of values and expenditure will save us from what otherwise would be a dim and dismal future for the centres of our great urban areas.

2.4 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I am grateful to

my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) for initiating the debate. It has been hard-hitting and interesting, and I have listened to it with great interest and attention. I congratulate my hon. Friend on the manner in which he introduced the motion. I hope that he and his son have both recovered from the shock of the attack that they suffered at Wembley last week. I hope that his son will not have unpleasant memories of British life.

I should like to describe how the Government are attempting to respond to some of the problems of the inner cities and the housing problem. I will try to answer some of the other issues that have been raised as well.

The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) rightly said that it is difficult to define inner city problems. There are many cities with similar difficulties, but we must be careful not to assume that all cities are the same. I utterly reject his analysis of how the Government have responded to those problems. I also reject the assumption made by many Opposition Members that the Government's insistence on initiating partnership between the private and public sectors is causing the problem.

The hon. Gentleman rightly said that there is a great deal of hope in our cities, but he insisted that we could solve the problems only by putting public money into housing, city centres and local government. In 1979, we had to sit down and work out why previous efforts had failed and to try to find a different approach.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) mentioned partnerships, and said that many people have failed to attack the problems of inner cities. He mentioned Ministers who, from 1968 to 1981, have made identical statements. He also said that junior Ministers seem to end up going to designated districts and that senior Ministers go to better programme and partnership areas. He said that partnerships were in essence between Government Departments and local authorities. That is not quite true—partnerships meet the voluntary sector.

Partnership and programme authorities produce inner area programmes which set strategy and list schemes on which the private sector, chambers of commerce, the voluntary sector and the Sports Council, for example, are consulted before they are approved. Partnership authorities have been seen to work. Indeed, the hon. Member for Norwood pointed to them as a solution. They have been made to work in Birmingham, where local authorities of whatever political outlook have met with success. By contrast, a local authority that does not have a positive attitude towards partnership, Liverpool, has slammed the door on co-operation and the offer of assistance. That seems to be why it is adding to its urban degeneration rather than to urban regeneration.

The Government are guided by four main principles in targeting assistance on inner cities. First, they seek to target assistance on the most needy areas where results can be seen, and stimulus given to wider regeneration. Secondly, the Government are convinced that it is of great assistance to keep regulation and intervention by central and local government to a minimum. That concentrates activity on creating the right climate for investment and enterprise. Thirdly, we must build up business confidence by tackling dereliction, by pump-priming investment and by improving local labour skills. The Government have consciously made efforts to improve all those aspects. Fourthly, we want to help to make urban areas places where people want to live and industry wants to be. Indeed, I echo the view of the hon. Member for Norwood that people want to stay in inner cities because they are attractive places to live. Therefore, we must emphasise the importance of attracting skilled people back into those areas, of improving job prospects for those already there, and of reinforcing residents' pride in their community. Those are fundamental and important objectives.

At the heart of our urban strategy is the recognition that to achieve the regeneration of inner city areas priority must be given to creating a climate in which the private sector is encouraged, and the spirit of enterprise and innovation is engendered.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister reaffirm that, in seeking to reduce exclusive decision-making by central and local government, important principles are accountability for what is decided and the participation of local people in those decisions? Otherwise, the private sector or development corporations and the like act unaccountably and inconsistently with the views of the communities whom they seek to regenerate.

Mrs. Rumbold: In essence that is exactly the partnership principle, and one which I am happy to reaffirm within that context.

The main thrust of our policies is geared to providing the means to improve the quality of the local environment, the living conditions and the skill levels which will make urban areas attractive both to local entrepreneurs and inward investors as places to develop and expand their businesses.

We have heard about urban development corporations, and they are good examples of the Government's policy of encouraging opportunity. They have not relied simply on public money to secure regeneration, although those sums have been substantial. By the end of 1985-86 some £250 million of public money will have been directed to the redevelopment of London's derelict dockland areas.

Mr. Tony Banks: No accountability.

Mrs. Rumbold: I know that the hon. Gentleman will say that there is no accountability, but he should visit London's derelict dockland areas which were derelict for years and see what is springing up and how splendid it is. A similar achievement has been gained in the Merseyside development corporation area, where more than 3·3 million visitors went to the Liverpool international garden festival.

Mr Simon Hughes: What about the people who live there?

Mrs. Rumbold: Indeed, the people who live there are, obviously, net beneficiaries of such urban improvements.

The urban development corporations represent the Government's willingness to commit substantial public funds to carefully targeted initiatives to encourage investment. Ministers are often asked whether there are to be any further UDCs. I am not sure whether there are sufficient places that share the characteristics of London and Liverpool docklands, but we can look at the experiences to see whether there is any possibility, without replicating the machinery, of encouraging such development.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) acknowledged that Coin street has received official approval from the Department of the Environment, just as Lambeth borough council has received official

[Mrs. Rumbold]

approval for the payment of housing association grant to the Mulberry housing association. I am sure that he will be glad to see that.

The hon. Member also asked me about parish councils and I suspect that he wanted to ask about accountability. There are no plans to introduce parish, neighbourhood and community councils into the London area. I am sure that he will be sad to hear that I am an unrepentant advocate of the first-past-the-post system of elections. I do not find the local elections a persuasive reason for changing the system of our electoral law.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Even if I cannot persuade the hon. Lady during this Parliament about electoral reform, will she look again at introducing parish councils in London? There is great public demand for them.

Mrs. Rumbold: I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

Much has been said about the urban programme and it has grown substantially since 1979, from an allocation of £90 million to one of over £300 million. In this financial year, the urban programme will provide, in the major urban areas, 900 small workplace units, 800 business starts, 1,600 grants and loans to firms, creating or retaining 24,000 jobs. This facility is appreciated and used. I have seen it in cities such as Nottingham, Leicester, Liverpool and Bradford. The urban programme will help to reclaim some 2,500 acres of derelict land and improve vacant or underused buildings.

The House may have noticed speculation about the responsibility for making urban policy, but discussions about urban issues involve a substantial proportion of the Ministers on the Government's payroll. Urban problems cover health and social services and law and order, both of which we have heard much about today, education, race, employment, training, and industrial and transport issues. The response to the range of urban problems that have been vividly described by hon. Members has to be flexible and grounded in carefully tuned and targeted programmes.

For this reason, we have established city action teams to pull together the programmes from the Departments of the Environment, Trade and Industry and Employment and the Manpower Services Commission. We can be proud of this because here, as with other Government programmes, the aim is to learn and apply lessons about the direction of the large public sums that are going into the inner city areas through a variety of programmes. It is important to see that that money goes to those who most need it.

We have heard much about the depressing sight in so many of our older towns and cities of acres of derelict and underused land. This is a waste of resources, and something that the Government have been determined to attack. The land register systems have helped to attack this problem and the Government have paid a great deal of attention to ensure that land holdings by Departments and the nationalised industries and the statutory undertakers are reviewed regularly with a view to disposing of surplus land as quickly as possible. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has encouraged local authorities to take a similarly positive attitude. It is a disgrace that so much land remains in public ownership and is not used as it should be.

The Government are changing policy towards the derelict land reclamation programme. The fact is that 45 per cent. of all land used for housing is on either previously developed or unused land within built-up areas. We wish to bring this land into use to resist the pressure on companies to move out into the green belt. This should be seen as a positive move. Since 1979 we have doubled, in real terms, the resources that are made available for derelict land reclamation. They have been increased from £23 million in 1979 to £78 million during the current financial year. The derelict land grant is absolutely critical to encouraging private investment and it has been successful. There is much more investment in the inner cities now than there was in the past. Our aim is to reclaim sites where we believe that new development will be possible.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams referred to the need to relax the planning restrictions in the inner cities. This would help to relieve pressure on the green belt. In recent years we have tried to change attitudes towards planning by emphasising that the system must provide properly for both housing and industrial development while maintaining well-established conservation policies. That is an exceedingly important part of our remit. We have challenged the assumption that planning exists primarily to restrict or prevent development. Its proper purpose is to ensure efficiency and economy in the use of development land. We are keeping up the pressure on local authorities to improve their performance in handling planning applications.

The Government have also examined the urban development grant. We have a good story to tell about our support of individual projects. About 179 projects are bringing in £350 million of private investment in return for £85 million of public sector investment. This has created 20,000 jobs, half of which are commercial while the other half are industrial. The Government have also supported the provision of 3,500 homes. I do not know how it can be said that this Government have made no effort to support urban regeneration and urban renewal. The grants that we have made have led to the development of derelict and disused land, and private business must be encouraged to use that land.

The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) referred to Trafford park. It was set up in the 1890s as a major industrial estate. It is situated at the head of the Manchester ship canal. The hon. Gentleman complains about the large amount of urban dereliction in his area. However, the Trafford park major manufacturers' group has persuaded the Trafford borough council, the Department of Trade and Industry and my Department each to invest £25,000 in the Trafford park investment strategy. I hope that that will be of some comfort to him.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) referred to an area that both he and I know. He said that he thought that lack of local authority public expenditure had led to housing dereliction in the area. I do not agree with him, but I must now turn to a matter that must be raised. In this debate, the right to buy has been referred to as an absolutely essential choice that ought to be available to those who live in the inner cities. Nobody who is familiar with the inner cities can doubt the importance of humanising some of the council estates which have displaced private housing in so many areas. The right to buy is designed to introduce variety in the place of uniformity. It enables people to look after their own homes instead of having to rely upon remote housing departments to do it for them. Many right hon. and hon. Members on

both sides of the House have complained today about the dereliction that is caused by long-distance maintenance and long-distance accountability. Therefore, it is important to look at the impact that the right to buy has produced.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the hon. Lady address the point that I raised earlier about why the Government refused to extend the right to buy to private tenants, who often live in appalling, derelict conditions, in homes that are not being properly maintained by their landlords?

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall be coming to that point in a moment.

The major impact on inner cities will come not just from the right to buy houses but from the right to buy flats. Flats represent only 4 per cent. of all sales and it is not hard to see why. A tenant buying a flat still has to look to the landlord to maintain and manage the rest of the block and has to contribute to the service charges and the landlord's maintenance costs. But we are planning to help tenants to do just that.

The Housing and Planning Bill, which has now completed its first stages through this House, provides for a higher discount on flats sold under the right to buy. For a tenant with a minimum qualifying period of two years, the new scale will start at 44 per cent. and will rise by 2 per cent. for each additional year of the tenant's qualifying period to a maximum of 70 per cent. Thus, a tenant of 15 years' standing will qualify for a maximum discount. I shall be surprised if that is not an extremely popular and well-taken-up provision.

The Bill also provides for tenants buying flats to have better protection against high service charges and we are confident that many tenants will see this as a satisfactory method of ensuring homes for people in need, not least those in later life.

We did not underrate the difficulty of introducing owner-occupation on a large scale into high-rise council blocks, but it is well worth trying and the Bill gives tenants of flats solid encouragement.

To back that up, one must point to the London borough of Wandsworth and its great success in the way that it has managed its housing. A balanced sales policy has provided the capital to pull up the private sector and to upgrade its public sector. Receipts are ploughed back into the public sector and they provide local infrastructure. They improve the environment and help to guarantee jobs. Anyone who went through Wandsworth eight years ago and does so again today cannot fail to see the changes that that successful local authority has produced by its imaginative sale of council houses, ploughing the money that it has received back into the public sector, ensuring that the environment and the infrastructure are right.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mrs. Rumbold: It is essential that that policy is pursued because it has proven to be a great success.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams also mentioned the right to rent and short tenancies. Hon. Members have reported and spoken about a number of council properties today that have been reduced in recent years in response to Government pressure, but there is still a scandalously high number. Therefore, I sympathise with my hon. Friend's suggestion that there should be a right to rent. However, there are difficulties which must not be brushed on one side. For example, a single person on a waiting list could become a tenant of a four-bedroomed house which had been empty for a specified time just ahead of a large needy family which was waiting to clock up its qualifying period of registration.

The urban housing renewal programme is highly successful. The private rented sector should play a greater role in providing housing choice.

We were told by the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) that shorthold tenures have not been successful but it is mainly because they have been obstructed by the rather doctrinal policies of many Labour authorities that they have not had the success that they deserve. Moreover, in response to his rather spurious point that sales make it more difficult for local authorities to house those in need, I should say that most of those who have bought would have been likely to remain in their present homes anyway as tenants and therefore would not have released housing.

The debate has been interesting, but nothing has been suggested by those on the Opposition Benches that would do more than that which the Government have done to tackle the problems of the inner cities.

2.29 pm

Mr. Heddle: I thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for her reply, and all hon. Members on both sides of the House for ensuring that the debate has been basically constructive and good natured in the true tradition of Friday business. I am bound to say that I think that the debate was marred earlier by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) raising specious——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

FORESTRY BILL

As amended, considered; reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

OWNERSHIP OF THE MEDIA BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): As the Bill has not been printed, I decline to propose the Question. Second Reading what day?

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 June.

FIRE PRECAUTIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

COMPANIES BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[18 April]—That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

MARRIAGE (PROHIBITED DEGREES OF RELATIONSHIP) BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Sir W. van Straubenzee.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Bill read the Third time and passed, without amendment.

INCEST AND RELATED OFFENCES (SCOTLAND) BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

MEDICAL ACT 1983 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 June.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not catch the name of the hon. Member from whom you accepted an objection. Can you inform the House who it was?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. My only job is to take an objection if there is one. I clearly heard an objection and, therefore, I am carrying out the customary procedures of the House.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 20th May, the Motion in the name of Mr. John Biffen relating to Privileges may be proceeded with, though opposed, until One o'clock, and, if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of by that hour, Mr. Speaker shall put the Question on any Amendment which may have been moved, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any other Amendments selected by him which may then be moved, and on the Main Question, or the Main Question, as amended.

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 21st May, the Motion in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock, relating to Town and Country Planning (S.I. 1986, No. 812), may be proceeded with until One o'clock or for three hours after it has been entered upon, whichever is the later.*—[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Royal Ordnance Factories

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

2.35 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): In 1575 Francis Lee, who was one of the four master gunners in the Tower of London, petitioned the Privy Council for permission to import saltpetre to start the manufacture of gunpowder. In his petition, after some very polite remarks, he began with a quotation from the first book of Samuel, chapter 13, verse 19:

"There was no Smith found throughout the land of Israel lest the Hebrews should make them swords and spears."

He then said:

"So now no powder made for her Highness in England, but provision made out of foreign part as of late from Barbary, Hamburg and Antwerp which provisions in the time of the Duke D'Alva were cut off."

Nothing changes because the royal ordnance factories today are in exactly that position. We have a Government who pretend, at extraordinary length, that they are concerned with the defence of the realm—yet they are prepared, quite cheerfully and without proper thought, to hand over the future of the defence of this country to any manufacturer of arms anywhere in the world.

We all know that the ROFs have gone through an exceedingly difficult time. I am especially concerned about the ROF at Radway Green, which is close to my constituency and where many of my constituents work. The reality is that all the ROFs are dedicated to their work, and have been ever since their creation long before the time of Elizabeth I when the privately-provided gunpowder to the Armada was found not to be effective. The state armories and ordnances have fulfilled their tasks admirably.

This Government, unlike any other of any complexion, regard the ROFs as a suitable asset to be flogged off in the market place. They were first put through the procedure of being made private companies and they are now to be floated in July. It is important that we should understand exactly what is happening. The Ministry of Defence—which, after all, is the main customer of the ROFs—is behaving in the most arbitrary and extraordinary manner. Its own figures reveal that 60 million rounds of ammunition were purchased abroad in 1985 and 1986. The MOD says that it moved from the 1 per cent. that it used to buy abroad to about 24 per cent. by 1985 because it is looking for a much better deal for the taxpayer and good value for money.

Quite frankly, it is extraordinary that the ammunition factory at Radway Green, which is the only factory producing small arms and ammunition, has never stopped the flow of that ammunition because of industrial action. It has provided ammunition which has been used in the Falklands and in Northern Ireland, and which has always ensured that the British Army is properly equipped. Yet recently there was an extraordinary incident of the MOD placing an order with a Belgian firm, only to be met with industrial action so that it could not have delivery of its order.

The MOD is in control of the orders for the ROFs. The percentage of small arms orders placed abroad has risen but, since the beginning of April, 2·7 million more rounds of small arms ammunition have been purchased. There is a good indication that already we may have filled the 10 per cent. of orders we were told would be placed elsewhere. The ROF not only has an empty order book but, at Radway Green, has already laid off workers. It is possible that those skilled workers will be dispersed yet further if orders are not forthcoming.

The royal ordnance factories are the only source of the United Kingdom's small arms ammunition. The Minister talks about getting good value for money, but it is important that he should tell us also what will happen if ROF Radway Green does not get sufficient orders to make it viable in the coming transitional period. It is all very well to say that, when it becomes a private company, it will be able to compete with any company abroad. We know that even the Government and those companies abroad with which the Government have placed orders are almost entirely, with one exception, run, subsidised and controlled by the Governments of those countries. The Government have been buying from the Portuguese, from one private German firm, which is part of the Flick empire—that should give many people pause for thought—from Raufoss in Norway, which is not only an efficient but an expensive company, and from the Greek Powder and Cartridge Company.

I have asked more than once whether we are convinced that the end-user certificate will ensure that the ammunition that is being bought is genuine and that there will be monitoring all down the line, but I have not yet received adequate answers.

It is important to understand that, if the ROF's order books are controlled by the Government, the ROFs need to be given some protection. At the moment, they are getting the worst of all worlds. They no longer have the relationship of a state factory to a Government, and their individual workers are no longer protected by being civil servants—indeed, many are suffering because of that. Nevertheless, the Government seek to dictate the size of the orders and threaten to place their orders abroad, presumably in the sacred name of competition. There is a real danger if this nation is dependent on supplies from overseas or, alternatively, if we have factories which have been run down to such an extent that they are no longer viable.

The royal ordnance factories developed not only rifles but many specific items because the relationship was of civil servants to Government. We now face the frightening situation in which the Government use those detailed statistics and that information to allow foreign companies to tender in opposition to the ROFs for British orders and to use that commercial information to produce the same type of goods for sale in other countries—in effect, using the ROFs' intellectual copyright. Any other Government would be deeply ashamed of that extraordinary development.

There has already been a downward revision of the amounts to be raised from the sale of the ROFs' assets. Not only will there not be an enormous amount of money made available for other purposes, but this important defence asset will be flogged off without any obvious advantage.

The Ministry of Defence has kept the ROFs in considerable suspense, presumably negotiating with them for individual contracts, but giving them little leeway in the move from being a state-owned to a private company, or any indication of the size of the orders that will be placed with them. I would not like to accuse Ministers of behaving like silly boys, but I wonder whether it is true that a question tabled last night is to be answered today,

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

after the debate has taken place, giving some information about an order to be placed at Radway Green, which will be the equivalent of only one year's order, not the three-year package that royal ordnance factories have been seeking. If that is so, it is an abuse of the facilities of the House.

I, in common with my hon. Friends, have been questioning the Minister for about four months about the way in which the company is to be floated, the size of the order books, from where the ammunition is being brought, what facilities will be available, and what will happen to the people in the factories. I have been given the most extraordinarily obtuse and, in some cases, contradictory answers. If, on the eve of my raising this matter on the Floor of the House, the Minister puts a written answer into the Lobby which gives one part of the information but not all of the commitments that are being asked for by royal ordnance factories, then he is behaving disgracefully and many people will find that difficult to accept.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): My hon. Friend is trying to get answers from the Minister from whom I have been trying to get answers for the past 18 months. My hon. Friend has made a strong case for Radway Green, but I want to make a case for all royal ordnance factories. As my hon. Friend has clearly demonstrated, morale is declining. Morale has gone down even further because of the failure of the Government to give answers on pension rights and their failure to respond to my hon. Friend and people like myself who are seeking firm commitments on pensions. The Minister must now come clean, as my hon. Friend is asking.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am afraid that the point made by my hon. Friend can be repeated over and over again. The people working in the factories no longer have any security of tenure. They no longer have any response from the Government to the commitment that they have shown over many years. Many of them have accepted lower rates of pay in return for the satisfaction of doing a job that they thought was important for the country, a job which, after all, replenished the stores after the Falklands war and made it possible for the Government to exercise political opportunism in the south Atlantic. In many instances they are now thanked by being put out on the stones. That is a clear indication of the Government's attitude.

In replies to me, the Minister always says that he will take account of the national interest. He says that, as to future orders, negotiations are now at an advanced stage and that he expects them to result in further substantial contracts and that he will let me know when that stage has been reached.

It is not good enough. The Conservative Government have made plain, for as long as I have been in politics, their belief in a proper defence for the realm and in properly organised provision for the armed services. They have now behaved in probably the most hypocritical and irresponsible way that it is possible for any Government to behave. They intend to treat these units as if they are some simple asset to be sold off. They have not taken account of the national interest. They will deprive this country of proper conventional arms and, at the time of the next general election, I expect they will tell the electors that they cannot possibly trust anyone else because the Conservative party is the only one to understand the need to defend the British people. The Government must give us a commitment for continuing employment in the royal ordnance factories, and give us some indication that the Government will not simply behave in this arbitrary and unbalanced way. We might then begin to believe that the Government seriously care about the future of the defence of this country. Unless we have those assurances, we shall know, in simple terms, that to this Government any asset, whether a defence asset, the protection of the people or whatever, can be sold off for filthy lucre and, at the end of the day, it will be presented as a great advance when we all know that it is utter hypocrisy.

2.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): Despite the tone of some of her comments, I still congratulate the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on securing the opportunity to raise this important matter in the House. I well understand her genuine concern for her constituents who work at the small arms ammunition factory at Radway Green, and for the future of royal ordnance factories as a whole.

Without wishing to be unduly pedantic, I should like to say, however, that we are no longer involved in the sale of the royal ordnance factories. We have created a new company—Royal Ordnance plc.

I am pleased that this afternoon my hon. Friend the Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover) is with us. He has a deep concern for his constituents who work at the royal ordnance factory at Chorley and others in Lancashire. The hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) is also here, and I know of his deep concern, too, for his constituents who work at the royal ordnance factory at Patricroft, which he knows I have visited.

There are many positive arguments in favour of the change of status of Royal Ordnance. The resources available to defence are always limited, and, as this week's White Paper made clear, it is an important task for the Ministry of Defence to get the best value for money. That means that we must look for taut and efficient contractors, and we must look to the pressures of competition to ensure that we get the best defence out of the resources we put in. We believe that it is only by being in the private sector that Royal Ordnance can best respond to those competitive pressures and it is essential for its future development and prosperity that it does respond to those pressures.

It is undeniable that the capacity of Royal Ordnance is greater than is necessary solely to meet the needs of the Ministry of Defence. It has been the case for some years now that the organisation has to sell its products abroad if it hopes to utilise all its available capacity. There have been some notable successes in the past as well as the unfortunate effects of Iran. But Royal Ordnance's future depends critically on its ability to export. That means that it must become increasingly competitive, and that requires the structure, personnel and drive to identify its markets and to export into them successfully.

The Government decided that the best way of securing the future of Royal Ordnance and of exploiting its undoubted potential was to turn it into a fully fledged commercial company. As a result, the Ordnance Factories and Military Services Act was passed in 1984. Under the terms of the Act, the Government made a scheme which took effect on 2 January 1985 and which transferred to

Royal Ordnance the assets and liabilities of the trading fund and of research and development facilities at Westcott and Waltham Abbey together with the associated rocket motor production factory at Summerfield. On 22 October last year, my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement made clear our intention to move the whole company into the private sector by means of flotation of the shares subject to prevailing trading and stock market conditions. Although no final decisions have been taken on the flotation, I should like to describe some of the progress we have made since the creation of Royal Ordnance plc.

First, the people. We had earlier appointed a new chairman of the former royal ordnance factories to help supervise their transition into a company. Once vesting day was successfully past and the company was in a new environment, we concluded that it would be right to bring in a different expertise to see the company through the process of a flotation on the stock market. Mr. Bryan Basset was appointed chairman of Royal Ordnance plc in July last year. On 1 April this year, we appointed a new chief executive with wide private sector experience essential to the future development of the organisation, Mr. Roger Pinnington. They join other individuals who have been brought in from the private sector because of their particular expertise in various aspects of business and, of course, they join the wealth of experience which already exists in Royal Ordnance and which will be the foundation of its future success. The head office has been slimmed down and the company is run by a smaller board with four non-executive directors comprising Lord King, Sir Arnold Hall, Air Chief Marshall Sir Douglas Lowe, and Field Marshal Sir John Stanier.

There have also been some important organisational changes. The company is now structured into four divisions — ammunition, small arms, explosives, and weapons and fighting vehicles. The research and development side of the company has started to be expanded. The explosives division already had within it significant R and D resources transferred from the Ministry of Defence, but the newly appointed R and D director has the job of continuing the expansion of the expertise in the other areas of the company's business and ensuring the healthy growth of private venture R and D expenditure.

The second area of particular expansion has been in sales and marketing. In the past, those functions had been carried out within the Ministry of Defence but Royal Ordnance has since April 1983 taken over responsibility for its sales and set in hand the development of a full-scale marketing organisation. As evidence of the success of the new approach within Royal Ordnance, export orders for ammunition won competitively in 1985 amounted to well over £100 million. That represented a major increase in the level of orders achieved in previous years.

The company is presently in the process of putting the finishing touches to the presentation of its 1985 accounts. They will set out in more detail the success achieved, and the prospectus that we are preparing will describe more fully than I can in the short time available to me where the company has got to in its transformation and its prospects.

The hon. Lady raised the whole question of ammunition procurement. As the House will be aware, we have in recent years been adjusting our approach to ammunition procurement to reflect the commercial status of Royal Ordnance. It was appropriate, when the royal ordnance factories formed part of the Ministry of Defence, for the factories to supply, to the limit of their ability and capacity, the armed services' requirements for ammunition as for other commodities in their product range. This was known as the preferred source policy.

However, as I stated earlier, it is now our policy to secure the economies of competitive procurement across the range of defence equipment, and ammunition procurement has been affected by this process. In the latter context, our aim has been to develop competition progressively, and we have consulted Royal Ordnance over our intentions in this respect. In the financial year 1985-86 we put about 10 per cent. of the former preferred source programme to competition and Royal Ordnance succeeded in winning about half of the contracts in question, in addition to the 90 per cent. of the programme which it was awarded non-competitively. We propose to build upon this promising beginning, and in this respect we foresee a continuing requirement for ammunition at or slightly above the present level.

I know that the hon. Lady is particularly concerned about small arms ammunition, which is manufactured at Royal Ordnance plc's factory at Radway Green in Cheshire. She will know that we have in recent weeks been in discussion with the company concerning future requirements for small arms ammunition. As I announced in a written reply today in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton), I am pleased to confirm that it has now been decided to award several major contracts worth about £35 million to the factory for 5·56 mm and 7·62 mm ammunition, representing the balance of our foreseen requirements until April next year. We remain in discussion with the company concerning our requirements for subsequent years.

The nature of the business of Royal Ordnance and the importance of its products to the defence of the United Kingdom is such that we would not wish to see control of the company passing into foreign hands. During the many debates on the passage of the Bill, the Government made clear their determination to ensure adequate control over foreign ownership, which we intend to exercise by the creation of a special share. We are entirely satisfied that strict vetting of share applications, coupled with the provisions of the Companies Act and Royal Ordnance's articles of association, will apply to protect the Government's position.

There is one aspect of that control on which I should like to tell the House of a revision in the Government's thinking. Our intention had been to amend the articles of association to include limitations on foreign shareholdings and also on disposals of assets over a certain level. On the latter point, we had previously indicated that we thought the right level at which the Government's agreement would be necessary was 15 per cent. of the company's assets. On further reflection, we have concluded that the level should be 25 per cent. This would bring the position into line with that we have adopted on other privatisations, such as Cable and Wireless, Amersham International, Sealink, and Jaguar, where such control was appropriate. Twenty-five per cent. is also the level at which under stock exchange rules the agreement of the majority of shareholders is required to the disposal of its assets.

As with any other defence contractor, numbers employed at Royal Ordnance have always been dependent on efficiency and the order book. Therefore, I must make

[Mr. John Lee]

it clear that employment levels are now a matter for the company to decide in the light of commercial factors. Sadly, some 1,500 redundancies have occurred this year, 550 of them at Radway Green.

Finally, concern was expressed by the hon. Member for Eccles over the pension rights of Royal Ordnance employees; there are still one or two outstanding issues to be settled. The Royal Ordnance pension arrangements provide a very secure basis for a fully index-linked scheme. We have, however, accepted that the ability of RO to reduce contributions if, for example, the company was doing badly is a change from the terms of the principal Civil Service pension scheme. Our advice is that the risk of this occurring is insubstantial and so remote as to be unquantifiable, but, to honour our commitment that there should be no detriment in the scheme, we have offered to pay a nominal sum of £100 to each RO plc employee who transferred out of the PCSPS on 2 January 1985. The payment would be full and final compensation for the risk of detriment occurring and reflects the advice that a court award, if made at all, would be a notional one only. The trade unions are currently considering this offer.

In conclusion, I acknowledge the substantial changes that have taken place in Royal Ordnance plc and pay tribute to the way in which management and employees at all levels have responded to the challenge. I wish them all good fortune in the future.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 6 May 1986

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Court, Cambridge

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Attorney-General what proposals he has to locate a new Crown court in Cambridge; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The courtrooms now available for use by the Crown Court in Cambridge and Wisbech are expected to meet requirements until after the year 2000 AD. Although the quality of the accommodation is lacking in some respects other areas have more urgent needs for additional accommodation and must take priority. There is no immediate intention to provide a new building for the Crown Court in Cambridge, but the situation will be kept under review.

Land Registration

Mr. Rooker asked the Attorney-General when he expects to bring forward legislation based upon the Law Commission's report No. 148 in respect of land registration.

The Attorney-General: Comments on the Law Commission's proposals are being received. The Government will make a decision as to whether to give effect to the proposals when the comments have been fully considered.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 May.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 May.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is attending the economic summit in Tokyo.

Head of the Civil Service

Q17. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to separate the functions of Head of the Civil Service from those of the Secretary of the Cabinet when a suitable opportunity arises.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is content with the current arrangements and has no plans to change them. This is, however, one of the subjects on which a Sub-Committee of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee has heard evidence; my right hon. Friend will of course study the Committee's report when it is received.

East Anglia

Q79. **Mr. Freud** asked the Prime Minister if she proposes to pay an official visit to East Anglia.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Korean War (Memorial)

Mr. Wallace asked the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to sponsor the erection of a national memorial to the United Kingdom service men who lost their lives in the Korean war; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply. The Ministry of Defence is already providing full support to the Korean Veterans Association in its plans to erect such a memorial at St. Paul's, which is to be financed by public subscription.

Libya (United States Attack)

Mr. Nellist asked the Prime Minister what is the latest number of *(a)* messages of support and *(b)* expressions of opposition received by the Government in connection with the use of British bases for the United States attack on Libya.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if she will give the latest cumulative figure of *(a)* messages of support and *(b)* expressions of opposition received at 10 Downing street in connection with the use of British bases for the United States attack on Libya.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

Up to and including Saturday 3 May the Government have received about 13,620 representations against, and 6,550 representations for, the United Kingdom's support of the United States action.

Mr. Spearing asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government notified the Security Council of the use of bases in the United Kingdom for the air attack on Libya in accordance with article 51 of the United Nations charter.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

No. The obligation to report measures taken in exercise of the right of self-defence applied to the United States, which, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) told the House on 24 April, reported to the Secretary-General on 14 April.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. McNamara asked the Prime Minister how many meetings have taken place between herself and Unionist leaders since 15 November 1985; how many letters she has received from Unionist leaders; and how many she has sent, since that date.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

Since 15 November my right hon. Friend has met the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) once. My right hon. Friend has also had two meetings with the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder), once with a delegation from the Northern Ireland Assembly. My

right hon. Friend has received four letters from the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley and the hon. Member for Antrim, North and two from the hon. Member for North Down. My right hon. Friend has written two letters to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley and the hon. Member for Antrim, North and one letter to the hon. Member for North Down.

Mr. McNamara asked the Prime Minister if she will publish the content of any letters or documents sent to her by Unionist leaders, and sent by her to Unionist leaders since 15 November 1985 concerning discussions on the Anglo-Irish accord.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

It is not my right hon. Friend's normal practice to publish exchanges of correspondence. However, my right hon. Friend has made clear in the letters she has written to the Unionist leaders the importance of constructive dialogue for progress in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Janner asked the Prime Minister whether she will seek from the United Nations copies of all documents in their possession relating to Dr. Kurt Waldheim's wartime activities.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

No.

Maudsley Hospital

Ms. Harman asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit the Maudsley hospital.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will describe the role of each Department concerned in the United Kingdom nuclear weapons programme;

(2) why, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), *Official Report*, 18 April, column *525*, on plutonium use, Her Majesty's Government's policy in answering such questions has altered since 4 February 1983.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend will reply on her return from Tokyo.

United States Aircraft (Military Operations)

Mr. Onslow asked the Prime Minister whether there are any circumstances in which United States aircraft based in the United Kingdom can be used in military operations without the consent of Her Majesty's Government; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend will reply on her return from Tokyo.

Nuclear Fallout

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Prime Minister what emergency plans and procedures exist to enable members of the public to prepare for the possibility of threat from nuclear fallout.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend's statement this afternoon.

TRANSPORT

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Bob Clay asked the Secretary of State for Transport which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each have been paid.

Mr. Ridley: Since 1981-82 my Department has engaged the following agencies for promotional campaigns, primarily for road safety, and has paid the sums as listed:

	£
1981-82	
Wasey Campbell	2,712,948
Doyle Dane Bernbach	223,639
Ogilvy Benson and Mather	1,579,230
1982-83	
Kingsway Media	16,432
Ogilvy and Mather	1,150,745
Wasey Campbell Ewald	1,853,382
Leo Burnett	2,576
1983-84	
Wasey Campbell Ewald	3,197,614
Ogilvy and Mather	1,781,313
Doyle Dane Bernbach	9,145
JPF Sporting Advertising	15,295
Leo Burnett	21,683
Dorlands	106,728
1984-85	
Davidson Pearce	903,390
Doyle Dane Bernbach	44,028
Ogilvy Mather	1,044,581
Lowe, Howard, Spink, Campbell, Ewald	73,777
Portland Outdoor	787,223
Dorlands	56,655
Leo Burnett	40,763
1985-86	
Poster Publicity Ltd. (Poster Agency)	50,642
Dorlands Advertising Ltd.	126,508
Leo Burnett Ltd.	1,508,298
Davidson Pearce Ltd.	836,541
Portland Outdoor Ltd. (Poster Agency)	236,488
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	148,816

In addition, over the same period, my Department has used the services of Charles Barker Advertising for the placing of statutory notices and recruitment advertising at a total cost of £3,330,000.

Vehicle Registration Prefix

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has calculated the financial effect to the motor industry of a change of vehicle prefix registration date from August to October.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is no basis for making such a calculation since the view of a major part of the motor industry has been that October would overall be the most beneficial alternative to the present August change. The amount of notice given should allow the industry as a

whole ample time to adjust to the new month of change. However if the industry on a whole now wants another arrangement we are prepared to consider it.

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the representations from the motor industry to his Department in favour of a change of vehicle prefix date from August to October;

(2) if he will list the representations from the motor industry to his Department against a change of vehicle prefix date from August to October.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply to him on 30 April and to my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) on 1 May.

Tractors (Driving Licences)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to permit a person aged 16 years in possession of a provisional driving licence, obtained to drive a tractor, to drive a tractor on the public highway in order to gain driving experience before the day of any driving test, and to permit any person with a driving licence to accompany that person; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No, I am not satisfied that such a change would be in the interests of road safety. Most agricultural tractors must be fitted with a safety cab and there is simply not the room to carry a supervisor. A similar exemption applies to other single seater vehicles, unable to carry a supervisor.

Heathrow-Gatwick Helicopter Link

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has yet reached a decision on the future of the scheduled helicopter service between Heathrow and Gatwick Airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have considered very carefully the Civil Aviation Authority's decision to grant British Caledonian's application to continue the Airlink service. I have also taken careful note of the evidence submitted to the authority, the transcript of the 16-day public hearing and the considerable number of representations which I received on the authority's decision.

Because of its environmental aspects, the authority notified the decision to me under section 17 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982. I have to decide whether it would be appropriate for me to direct the CAA to revoke the licence it granted for the Airlink service in order to prevent environmental disturbance caused by the helicopter. As with my decision in 1984 on a previous Airlink application, I believe that in reaching my decision the environmental disturbance caused by the helicopter has to be weighed against the economic benefits of allowing the service to continue.

The arguments for and against the service are very finely balanced. On the one hand I must take into account the degree of disturbance caused to those under the flight path. I am conscious that some of the environmental objections to the service are exaggerated. But, even allowing for this, it remains the case that disturbance caused by the Airlink service arouses widespread and genuine annoyance and causes some distress. On the other hand British Caledonian and other airlines earn significant revenues from passengers making connections over the London airport system; and Airlink has in the past undoubtedly helped to attract such passengers to London.

I believe, however, that the helicopter service is no longer so critical for this purpose. In addition to the fast and frequent coach service which now operates, the completion of the motorway link between the two airports should also allow fast journeys by other forms of road transport. Between them these should offer transferring passengers a sufficient choice of speed, comfort, convenience and price. Moreover, in the absence of a helicopter link the airlines will no doubt concentrate on seeking to improve further the quality of the surface links between the two airports. I believe this should be possible. Although a scheduled helicopter service would expand the choice a little further, I feel that the various alternatives to the Airlink service should be acceptable to the majority of passengers wishing to transfer from Heathrow to Gatwick and vice versa. I believe, therefore, that when the availability of these alternative forms of transport is taken into account the environmental disturbance caused by the helicopter cannot now be justified.

I am therefore minded to direct the CAA to revoke British Caledonian's licence to operate the helicopter service. Before doing so, however, I am consulting the authority as required under section 6(2) of the 1982 Act. My officials are also writing to British Caledonian.

I am aware there can be no guarantee that adequate surface links will be maintained. I would therefore be prepared to look again at the need for a scheduled service, should the question come before me at some future date, if the speed, frequency or quality of the alternatives deteriorate significantly, or if a service could be operated with markedly less impact. The alternatives to the helicopter, however, would first have to be given a year or two to prove themselves.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures his Department is taking to make more information available to hon. Members about the proposed Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: On 4 February the Government published a White Paper "The Channel Fixed Link" (Cmnd. 9735) which explained the basis of its choice of scheme and outlined the next steps. The promoters of the chosen scheme, Eurotunnel, formerly known as CTG—France-Manche, have arranged an exhibition in the North Tower foyer of the Department's offices at 2 Marsham street; it opens today and will run until 16 May. A member of Eurotunnel's staff will be present on weekdays between 12 noon and 6.30 pm to deal with any queries. I hope that as many Members of Parliament as possible will take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about the scheme.

SCOTLAND

Home Helps

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a comparative table showing the numbers of home helps employed in each region, division or island authority in Scotland each year from 1979 to 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: The information available centrally and included in the Scottish Education Department's annual publication "Home Care Services, Day Care Establishments and Day Services" is in the form of totals for each regional and island authority. These figures are as follows:

Number of home helps at 31 March (Whole time equivalent) 1979-1985

Regions	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Borders	130·7	103·9	106·1	107·7	108·8	101·8	101·1
Central	422·0	401·2	398·1	439·9	437·1	448·0	448·3
Dumfries and Galloway	258·8	321·0	312·5	318·9	284·5	314·7	303·0
Fife	519·1	543·6	502·9	514·2	536·3	585·5	586·0
Grampian	565·2	574·7	572·2	580·3	644·8	690·8	733·7
Highland	205·9	209·3	221·1	236·4	267·8	287·7	301·4
Lothian	1,643·3	1,779·8	1,734·4	1,643·0	1,538·1	1,479·0	1,477·4
Strathclyde	4,944·8	4,966·1	4,527·1	4,681·2	4,292·6	4,731·8	4,715·2
Tayside	528·2	523·5	537·7	529·2	548·7	572·8	553·7
Orkney	61·5	69·2	64·5	59·5	62·3	66·7	65·9
Shetland	48·0	55·8	51·6	52·8	57·4	52·1	48·4
Western Isles	151·4	1,137·8	95·0	138·9	178·2	154·5	167·7
SCOTLAND	9,478·9	9,685·9	9,123·2	9,302·0	8,956·6	9,485·4	9,501·8

School Meals

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a comparative table showing *(a)* the cost of fixed school meals in each region, division or island authority in Scotland from 1979 to 1985 and *(b)* the average amount spent on cafeteria meals.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested was not collected centrally prior to 1981. Details from 1981 to 1985 are as follows:

Region, Division or Islands Authority	*1981*		*1982*		*1983*		*1984*		*1985*	
	Charge for fixed price school meals (pence)	*Average amount spent on cafeteria meals (pence)*	*Charge for fixed price school meals (pence)*	*Average amount spent on cafeteria meals (pence)*	*Charge for fixed price school meals (pence)*	*Average amount spent on cafeteria meals (pence)*	*Charge for fixed price school meals (pence)*	*Average amount spent on cafeteria meals (pence)*	*Charge for fixed price school meals (pence)*	*Average amount spent on cafeteria meals (pence)*
Borders	P 35	40	P 40	44	P 42	48	44	P 52 S 54	46	P 34 S 52
Central	35	15	35	15	40	20	45	25	45	25
Dumfries and Galloway	40	35-40	P 45	50	P 50	35-50	50	35	52	41·5
Fife	35	50	40	50	45	42·5	48	42·5	50	43
Grampian	42	39	P 42 S 45	50	P 42 S 45	37	P 45 S 55	47	P 50 S 60	48
Highland	40	42	50	45	50	48	50	50	P 50 S 55	56
Lothian	35	34	35	40-45	45	40	45	48	S 55	50
Strathclyde:	40	—	45	50	50	50	53	—	55	—
Argyll and Bute	40	35	45	50	50	40	53	41	55	40
Ayr	40	40	45	50	50	45	53	46·5	55	46
Dumbarton	40	45-50	45	50	50	38-40	53	46·5	55	38-40
Glasgow	40	40-48	45	50	50	44	53	43·5	55	44
Lanark	40	41-48	45	50	50	49	53	51	55	48
Renfrew	40	45	45	50	50	35	53	40	55	45
Tayside	40	35-40	45	35-40	P 45 S 50	46	P 45 S 50	47·5	50	45
Orkney	35	*	40	*	50	*	50	45	50	50
Shetland	35	*	35	*	35	*	45	*	50	*
Western Isles	35	*	40	*	45	54	60	64·5	60	60

Notes:

P=Primary.
S=Secondary.
*=No Cafeteria Service.

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the method used by each regional authority for granting qualification to free school meals, and the numbers of children in these categories in each region receiving free meals as a result.

Mr. Allan Stewart: All education authorities have a statutory duty to provide free school meals for pupils whose families are in receipt of supplementary benefit or family income supplement. The following authorities are, at their discretion, also currently awarding free meals to some children on the basis of their family income—

Central
Dumfries and Galloway
Fife
Strathclyde
Orkney
Shetland
Western Isles

The criteria adopted for discretionary free meals varies from authority to authority.

Grampian and Western Isles also provide free school meals to pupils whose families are in receipt of housing benefit supplement.

Details of the number of pupils receiving free meals within each of these categories is not collected in the school meals census survey, which in January 1985 showed a total of 136,669 children receiving free school meals.

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a comparative table showing the total uptake of school meals to pupils present from 1979 to 1985 in each region, division or island authority in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is as follows:

Region Division or Island Authority	*1979*		*1980*		*1981*		*1982*		*1983*		*1984*		*1985*	
	Number of pupils present	*Number of meals taken*	*Number of pupils present*	*Number of meals taken*	*Number of pupils present*	*Number of meals taken*	*Number of pupils present*	*Number of meals taken*	*Number of pupils present*	*Number of meals taken*	*Number of pupils present*	*Number of meals taken*	*Number of pupils present*	*Number of meals taken*
Borders	16,674	8,931	16,256	7,968	16,063	5,882	14,941	5,508	15,005	5,277	14,707	5,198	14,060	5,095
Central	48,181	20,035	47,697	18,626	47,857	17,615	45,144	17,691	44,494	16,556	42,314	15,976	41,643	16,160
Dumfries and Galloway	24,338	14,480	24,232	13,623	23,925	13,031	22,383	11,807	22,553	12,196	21,995	12,077	20,809	11,381
Fife	61,668	28,846	60,168	25,799	59,574	23,551	57,290	22,488	56,698	21,484	52,425	20,815	52,610	21,862
Grampian	80,363	36,730	79,318	36,019	79,341	29,429	74,608	28,292	73,910	28,462	72,821	28,603	72,102	29,193
Highland	35,090	19,059	35,160	17,170	34,578	13,941	33,369	14,832	33,482	15,470	31,916	16,202	32,410	15,973
Lothian	118,770	56,756	115,863	49,783	114,149	42,810	108,808	44,094	106,588	37,420	99,041	38,368	99,931	42,172
Strathclyde:	435,678	205,933	420,433	177,508	414,295	155,329	391,392	143,657	386,914	146,058	351,577	145,174	348,738	146,796
Argyll and Bute	10,637	6,088	10,650	5,838	10,584	5,232	10,377	5,232	10,233	5,412	9,714	5,359	9,624	5,094
Ayr	70,385	377,235	68,408	33,819	66,537	28,259	61,347	23,901	62,767	24,692	59,701	25,178	57,611	25,936
Dumbarton	58,527	26,133	57,961	22,487	56,890	19,841	54,734	19,718	53,873	20,416	48,748	21,464	52,011	22,588
Glasgow	129,523	60,772	121,049	51,433	121,580	47,744	113,796	44,998	110,487	46,072	96,488	43,042	94,663	42,956
Lanark	99,141	42,008	96,668	34,884	95,022	30,046	90,451	27,352	89,465	27,011	82,119	27,110	79,942	26,885
Renfrew	67,465	33,697	65,697	29,047	63,682	24,207	60,687	22,456	60,089	22,455	54,807	23,021	54,887	23,337
Tayside	66,325	30,329	64,755	26,867	64,928	19,631	63,336	20,042	62,070	20,470	57,148	21,448	57,388	22,645
Orkney	3,176	2,017	3,232	2,035	3,163	1,928	2,846	1,597	3,273	1,922	3,201	1,895	3,124	1,964
Shetland	3,832	3,072	3,939	2,965	4,089	3,025	4,065	2,925	4,044	2,887	3,977	2,778	3,926	2,705
Western Isles	5,846	3,791	5,763	3,582	5,824	3,495	5,464	3,279	5,475	3,168	5,613	3,259	5,332	2,978
SCOTLAND	899,941	429,979	876,816	381,945	867,786	329,667	823,646	316,212	814,506	311,370	756,735	311,790	752,073	318,924

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the number and names of schools in each region or division in Scotland which do not supply school meals, giving the reasons for their not supplying meals.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information taken from the 1985 annual school meals census is as follows:

Region	*Number of Schools not providing meals*
Borders	17
Central	29
Dumfries and Galloway	5
Fife	40
Grampian	47
Highland	26
Lothian	91
Strathclyde:	111
Argyll and Bute	3
Ayr	29
Dumbarton	8
Glasgow	24
Lanark	32
Renfrew	15
Tayside	18
Orkney	5
Shetland	2
Western Isles	—
Scotland	391

I shall write to the hon. Member with the names of the schools and a summary of the reasons for not supplying meals.

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total number of staff employed in the school meals service each year since 1979 in each region of Scotland and *(b)* the numbers of staff employed for (i) 30 or more hours per week and (ii) less than 30 hours per week.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is as follows:

Region Division or Island Authority	*1979 Number of Staff Employed*			*1980 Number of Staff Employed*			*1981 Number of Staff Employed*			*1982 Number of Staff Employed*		
	More than 30 hpw	*Less than 30 hpw*	*Total*	*More than 30 hpw*	*Less than 30 hpw*	*Total*	*More than 30 hpw*	*Less than 30 hpw*	*Total*	*More than 30 hpw*	*Less than 30 hpw*	*Total*
Borders	105	196	301	94	199	293	56	192	248	55	182	237
Central	367	408	775	364	402	766	347	380	727	334	352	686
Dumfries and Galloway	195	408	603	169	407	576	189	397	586	163	400	563
Fife	341	618	959	333	669	1,002	286	564	850	253	581	834
Grampian	615	913	1,528	677	929	1,606	496	813	1,309	408	783	1,191
Highland	315	429	744	343	398	741	236	430	666	230	419	649

Region Division or Island Authority	1979 Number of Staff Employed			1980 Number of Staff Employed			1981 Number of Staff Employed			1982 Number of Staff Employed		
	More than 30 hpw	Less than 30 hpw	Total	More than 30 hpw	Less than 30 hpw	Total	More than 30 hpw	Less than 30 hpw	Total	More than 30 hpw	Less than 30 hpw	Total
Lothian	902	1,559	2,461	887	1,514	2,410	809	1,391	2,200	743	1,311	2,054
Strathclyde:	3,272	4,711	7,983	3,386	4,443	7,829	3,058	3,991	7,049	2,842	3,739	6,581
Argyll and Bute	104	144	248	96	152	248	90	147	237	97	141	238
Ayr	542	655	1,197	523	626	1,149	481	574	1,055	449	537	986
Dumbarton	169	830	999	186	802	988	170	746	916	162	717	879
Glasgow	1,033	1,580	2,613	1,173	1,370	2,543	1,030	1,195	2,225	966	1,088	2,054
Lanark	801	787	1,588	793	788	1,581	737	669	1,406	663	647	1,310
Renfrew	623	715	1,338	615	705	1,320	550	660	1,210	505	609	1,114
Tayside	700	611	1,311	557	597	1,154	345	588	933	291	526	817
Orkney	38	28	66	40	28	68	40	27	67	40	28	68
Shetland	67	49	116	71	51	122	66	50	116	67	51	118
Western Isles	75	97	172	72	100	172	68	92	160	39	121	160
Scotland	6,992	10,027	17,019	6,993	9,737	16,739	5,996	8,915	14,911	5,465	8,493	13,958

Region Division or Island Authority	1983 Number of Staff Employed			1984 Number of Staff Employed			1985 Number of Staff Employed		
	More than 30 hpw	Less than 30 hpw	Total	More than 30 hpw	Less than 30 hpw	Total	More than 30 hpw	Less than 30 hpw	Total
Borders	32	201	233	36	182	218	35	175	210
Central	305	369	674	287	346	633	285	354	639
Dumfries and Galloway	99	430	529	107	449	556	108	411	519
Fife	242	570	812	233	580	813	231	589	820
Grampian	426	779	1,205	410	741	1,151	404	740	1,144
Highland	232	403	635	224	408	632	222	414	636
Lothian	664	1,173	1,837	615	1,093	1,708	553	915	1,468
Strathclyde:	2,349	3,607	5,956	2,313	3,691	6,004	2,134	3,912	6,046
Argyll and Bute	70	162	232	69	158	227	59	161	220
Ayr	350	596	946	346	621	967	321	623	944
Dumbarton	146	688	834	139	653	792	130	606	736
Glasgow	794	830	1,624	812	940	1,752	780	1,084	1,864
Lanark	573	681	1,254	547	684	1,231	512	683	1,195
Renfrew	416	650	1,066	400	635	1,035	332	755	1,087
Tayside	270	618	888	266	633	899	246	659	905
Orkney	40	27	67	39	27	66	38	28	66
Shetland	58	55	113	54	55	109	53	53	106
Western Isles	47	113	160	42	108	150	41	99	140
Scotland	4,764	8,345	13,109	4,626	8,313	12,939	4,350	8,349	12,699

Roadworks, Caithness

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current proposed starting date for the reconstruction of the A9 at Navidale Brae, north of Helmsdale in Sutherland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The earliest possible start to an improvement of this section of the A9 would be in late 1987, subject to satisfactory economic appraisal, completion of statutory procedures and availability of funds.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each have been paid.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is set out in the table:

	£
1981-82	
Hall Advertising	158,755
J. F. Green Associates Ltd.	104,087
Arnott Sommerville Ltd.	25,000
1982-83	
J. F. Green Associates Ltd.	172,645
Hall Advertising	165,615
Arnott Sommerville Ltd.	63,110
1983-84	
Hall Advertising	123,660
Woolward Royds	107,430
Arnott Sommerville Ltd.	103,660
Ogilvy Mather (Scotland) Ltd.	50,990
J. F. Green Associates Ltd.	41,932
1984-85	
Woolward Royds	353,684
Ogilvy Mather (Scotland) Ltd.	122,450

	£
1985-86	
Woolward Royds	305,375
Ogilvy Mather (Scotland) Ltd.	74,315

House Condition Survey

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the next housing condition survey will be carried out in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: No national house condition surveys have been carried out in Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend is so far not convinced that the significant resources which would be required to produce accurate information beyond that already available should be deflected from the primary task of undertaking work on the housing stock.

Local authorities have duties to consider housing conditions and needs in their areas and powers to carry out surveys to identify the condition of the stock.

Lochaber

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of persons currently unemployed in Lochaber; in which age groups they are; and what was the figure for April and October in each of the years 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information on unemployment by age category is available in the House of Commons Library. Because of various changes in the way the statistics have been compiled, year by year comparisons over the period may mislead.

Scottish Development Agency (Renfrew)

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the Scottish Development Agency's available funds was spent in Renfrew district between January and April; if, during that period, any factors arose which caused the agency to alter its expenditure priorities in relation to Renfrew district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In the period January to April 1986 the Scottish Development Agency spent £740,000 in Renfrew district. This represents 1·9 per cent. of the agency's total expenditure over the same period. During that period no factors arose which caused the agency to alter its expenditure priorities in Renfrew district. On 18 February 1986 Paisley and Renfrew Enterprise Trust was launched. The agency is committed to providing £63,500 over three years in support of the trust's activities.

Land Tribunal

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make any additional or temporary appointment to the Land Tribunal for Scotland to expedite appeals under section 15(1A) to (1C) of the Local Government (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1963; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: From 1 October last year a part-time surveyor member of the Land Tribunal for Scotland became a full-time member for a period of two years. In addition two new part-time legal appointments were made also for a period of two years from 1 October 1985. All of these appointments were made primarily to deal with the anticipated work load on valuation appeals. I am not aware of any need for further appointments to the tribunal.

Sports Grounds (Rating)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to meet the Scottish Sports Association to discuss the rating of sports grounds and premises in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I am not aware of any request from the Scottish Sports Association for a meeting on this subject. I nevertheless appreciate the strength of feeling amongst sports clubs in Scotland about rates. The fact that the present valuation and rating systems in Great Britain can lead to differences of the kind some clubs have mentioned is one of the reasons the Government are tackling the difficult task of reforming local taxation, as is shown by our Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714). In the shorter term, many sports clubs have appealed against their rateable values, but I cannot comment on the merits of the cases. Rating relief of up to 100 per cent. is available to non-profit-making recreational clubs; decisions on this are wholly at the discretion of the appropriate rating authority.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has received from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities of the anticipated extra expenditure incurred by regions in settlement of teachers' pay for 1985-86.

Mr. Ancram: The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities have estimated that education authorities have incurred £11,286,000 expenditure on teachers' pay in 1985-86 in excess of the provision they originally made in their budgets for that year, after account is taken of the savings made by the authorities because of the teachers' strike action.

Royal Scottish National Hospital

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will arrange for the report of the Medical Health Commission on the Royal Scottish national hospital at Larbert to be published.

Mr. John MacKay: My hon. Friend is presumably referring to the annual report for 1985 of the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland dealing inter alia with its visits to various hospitals. I understand this report is now being prepared for publication.

Departmental Staff

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people were employed in his Department in 1975 and each subsequent year;

(2) how many people were employed in the different occupational categories in his Department in 1975 and each subsequent year.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 April 1986, c. *522*]: The information is set out in the table. The figures

relate to 1 April each year. Part-time staff are counted as half units and casual staff are excluded. The figures take account of the following staffing implications of machinery of government changes:—

Date	
July 1975	155·0 staff from Department of Trade and Industry
April 1978	501·0 staff from Property Services Agency
April 1980	107·0 staff from Property Services Agency
March 1984	448·5 staff to State Hospital
November 1984	96·0 staff from Department of Trade and Industry
April 1985	51·0 staff from Department of Health and Social Security
October 1985	162·0 staff to Royal Museums of Scotland
March 1986	169·5 staff to Royal Botanical Gardens
TOTAL	+130·0 staff

Scottish Office

	1975	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Non Industrial												
Administration Group	3,711½	3,982	3,749½	3,590	3,718½	3,564	3,420½	3,287	3,201	3,167½	3,444	3,490½
Common services (eg typing)	1,299½	1,370	1,335	1,336½	1,371	1,270½	1,244½	1,165	1,073½	1,071	849	863
Professional, Technical												
Scientific etc	1,908½	2,032½	1,976½	2,126	2,311½	2,213½	2,124½	2,086½	2,014½	1,995½	1,993½	1,795
Prison Service	2,081½	2,283	2,398½	2,466	2,479	2,586½	2,634½	2,620	2,621	2,636½	2,788½	2,934
State Hospital	339½	356½	352½	348½	359½	369	393½	407½	438	*	—	—
Industrial												
Prison service	92½	93	91	92	103	106	114	108	100	102	92	90
Other	606½	630	609½	941	832	893½	870	867½	837	801½	744½	645
Grand Total	10,039½	10,747	10,512½	10,900	11,174½	11,003	10,801½	1,054½	10,285	9,774	9,911½	9,817½

* Hived off 31 March 1984.

Prison Officers

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prison officers have received injuries due to attacks by inmates at Peterhead prison in the years 1980 to 1985 and the latest figure for 1986; how many officers required hospital treatment: and how many days were lost by officers in the same period due to injuries sustained.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 April 1986, c. *24*]: the information is as follows:

	Officers Injured	*Requiring Hospital Treatment*	*Days Lost through injury*
1980	15	1	203
1981	15	1	209
1982	23	nil	75
1983	18	1	210
1984	26	4	448
1985	20	4	378
1986*	8	2	102
Total	125	13	1,625

* Latest figures

WALES

Psychiatric Beds

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each district, and for each health authority in Wales *(a)* the number of psychiatric beds that would be required on a basis of 0·5 beds per 1,000 population and *(b)* the number of psychiatric beds currently available in each area.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The latest available information which relates to 1984 is shown in the following table:

	*Number of beds on a basis of 0·5 per 1,000 population**	*Average daily available beds†*	
		Mental illness‡	*Mental handicap*
Clwyd	198·1	706·5	92·0
East Dyfed	113·1	581·3	66·8
Gwent	219·8	937·0	438·3
Gwynedd	116·3	9·8	356·2
Mid Glamorgan	266·9	1,280·6	519·0
Pembrokeshire	54·3	Nil	32·0
Powys	55·3	350·0	211·7
South Glamorgan	197·2	655·0	421·3
West Glamorgan	182·3	371·7	142·5
WALES	1,403·6	4,891·1	2,279·8

* Using Registrar General's population estimates for 30 June 1984.
† At 31 December 1984.
‡ Includes beds for mentally ill children, adolescent psychiatric cases, psycho-geriatric and elderly mentally infirm cases.
Note: The individual figures may not add up to the Wales totals due to rounding.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Wales which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each have been paid.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The advertising agencies engaged for each of the past five years were as follows:

Financial year/Agency	*Payment (£)*
1981-82	
NIL	
1982-83	
Wasey Campbell Ewald Ltd	1,626
1983-84	
NIL	

Financial year/Agency	Payment (£)
1984-85	
J Walter Thompson Ltd	1,511
Davidson Pearce Ltd	1,438
1985-86	
Poster Media Ltd (poster agency)	17,611
Yellow Hammer Advertising Co Ltd	46,901
Golley Slater & Partners Ltd	150,000

Hospital Consultants (Prescriptions)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the health authorities and health districts in Wales which are making or have instituted arrangements to cease providing drugs and other medications from hospital dispensaries when they are prescribed by hospital consultants; and what will be the estimated savings to each district authority of the discontinuance of this service.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is not readily available and I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as I am in a position to do so.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Visits)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the adult prison population are estimated to receive only the minimum visiting entitlement of six and a half hours per year.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend will write to the hon. Member.

Prison Officers

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many male and female prison officers, respectively, were employed on the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Mellor: On 1 April 1986, 17,845 male and 1,042 female members of the prison officer class were employed in Prison Department outstations.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the evaluation by the scientific and research branch of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary on neighbourhood watch schemes is yet complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Home Office and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary keep the development of neighbourhood watch under careful review. This is a continuing process.

Although there is no evaluation as specifically described by my hon. Friend, the institute of criminology, Cambridge university and the directorate of management services of the Metropolitan police are both carrying out evaluations of neighbourhood watch in London. The results are expected to become available by the end of this year.

Remission

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the minimum sentence of imprisonment which is eligible for once third remission.

Mr. Mellor: Any prison sentence which, after taking account of reckonable remand time under section 67 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967, effectively exceeds five days attracts (by virtue of rule 5 of the Prison Rules 1964) one-third remission provided that the application of the rule does not result in an actual term served of less than five days.

Offensive Weapons

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to introduce legislation to prevent the sale of offensive weapons such as knuckle dusters, flick knives or machetes to children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The importation, manufacture and sale of flick knives (and gravity knives) is already prohibited under the Restriction of Offensive Weapons Act 1959 and 1961. Under the Prevention of Crime Act 1953 it is an offence to possess any offensive weapon (including knuckle dusters or a machete) in a public place without lawful authority or reasonable excuse. We are not persuaded that further legislation is necessary at present. But we do believe that retailers should act responsibly in regard to the sale of potentially offensive weapons of any kind particularly to the young and the impressionable. We have recently issued guidelines to that effect to traders in martial arts equipment. We shall continue to watch the position very closely.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each have been paid.

Mr. Hurd: The agencies engaged by the Home Office during the past five financial years, and the sums spent through these agencies, are as follows. The greater part of all these sums have been spent on buying advertising space and airtime and on production and a much smaller proportion on commission or fees to the agencies concerned.

Agency	Amount spent in financial year £
1981-82	
Boase Massimi Pollitt, Univas Partnership Ltd	917,797
Collett Dickenson Pearce & Partners Ltd	554,850
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd	100,239
Davidson Pearce Ltd	82,680
Charles Barker Group Ltd	30,285
1982-83	
Boase Massimi Pollitt Partnership Ltd	1,082,136
Collett Dickenson Pearce & Partners Ltd	909,740
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd	108,285
Davidson Pearce Ltd	20,260
Charles Barker Group Ltd	21,962
1983-84	
Davidson Pearce Ltd	40,738

Agency	Amount spent in financial year £
Boase Massimi Pollitt Partnership Ltd	1,314,648
Collett Dickenson Pearce & Partners Ltd	1,159,933
Portland Outdoor Advertising	118,417
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd	107,509
Charles Barker Group Ltd	18,500
1984-85	
Boase Massimi Pollitt Partnership Ltd	1,686,353
Poster Publicity Ltd	56,767
Davidson Pearce Ltd	42,913
Collett Dickenson Pearce & Partners Ltd	960,429
Portland Outdoor Advertising Ltd	271,134
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd	115,846
Charles Barker Group Ltd	16,551
1985-86	
Collett Dickenson Pearce & Partners Ltd	1,006,416
Portland Outdoor Advertising Ltd	314,829
Boase Massimi Pollitt Partnership Ltd	1,774,852
Davidson Pearce Ltd	148,082
Charles Barker Group Ltd	21,573

In additon to the sums shown for Charles Barker, additional amounts were spent on miscellaneous classified and semi-display advertising, mainly for job vacancies.

Community Radio

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to announce his decision on the franchise for Rutland community radio; and what are the reasons for the failure to announce it already.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to complete his consideration of the recommendations made by the advisory panel on community radio.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Since receiving the report of the Advisory Panel on Community Radio in February we have been giving careful consideration to the applications and to the issues raised for the planning and conduct of the community radio experiment. My right hon. Friend hopes to announce his conclusions soon. The Government decided to start the experiment to test the viability and effect of new services extending the range of radio broadcasting and so broadening consumer choice. We are therefore keen to see the experiment proceed and to provide useful results. We also have a responsibility, however, before any licences are awarded, to ensure both that the experiment strikes a fair balance between the different kinds of services to be provided and is set up in such a way as to provide a fair test, with suitable safeguards, of the extent to which they meet the needs of the communities concerned, so as to provide a sound basis for the future of community radio. This has involved further discussions with the chairman of the advisory board.

We understand the natural wish of the applicants to know the outcome. Letters have therefore been sent to all applicants explaining how matters stand.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the average waiting time for applicants for criminal injury claims to be dealt with;

(2) how many outstanding criminal injury applications there are to date.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on 23 April 1986, at column 149.

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of staff working for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for each year from 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The number of staff in post at the board, on 1 April of each year from 1979 to 1985, was as follows (part-time staff being each counted as one-half):

Date	Staff in post
1 April 1979	132·5
1 April 1980	156·5
1 April 1981	155
1 April 1982	163
1 April 1983	163
1 April 1984	182
1 April 1985	189

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he intends to take to reduce the number of outstanding criminal injury compensation applications.

Mr. Mellor: The financial provision for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in 1986-87 allows for an increase in staff and in compensation. We are assessing the appropriate provision for 1987-88 and subsequent years, having in mind the continued increase in applications.

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of applications for criminal injuries compensation for each year from 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested was published in respect of the financial years 1979-80 to 1984-85 in the 18th and 21st reports of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (Cmnd. 8752 and Cmnd. 9684). The provisional figure of applications received by the board in 1985-86 is about 39,700.

Weapons (Police Certification)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to require potential purchasers of airguns, catapults and martial arts devices to obtain a certificate from the police prior to purchase; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: High powered air weapons are already subject to control under the Firearms Act 1968 and a firearm certificate is required for their purchase and possession. The Act also controls the sale of low powered air weapons to young people under 17 years of age. We have no plans at present to introduce further legislation concerning air weapons or to licence other potentially offensive articles such as martial arts devices and catapults. We have already issued guidelines to traders about the sale of martial arts equipment, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. We would expect traders to exercise the same degree of responsibility in respect of the sale of catapults.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Stapleton (Documents)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answer of 28 April, *Official*

Report, column *301-2*, if he will call for a further report from the chief constable of Lincolnshire as to what has happened to the documents seized from Mr and Mrs Stapleton and neither returned to them nor produced as evidence for the purposes of the current investigation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that the committal proceedings in this case are to begin on 16 June. The documents held will be required then and may be required in any subsequent proceedings. There is nothing further to add to the reply given to the hon. Member on 28 April, at columns 301-2.

British Embassy, Dublin

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the British embassy in Dublin ceased issuing entry certificates to the United Kingdom; by what authority such a decision was taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The changes in the immigration rules which came into effect on 26 August 1985 (HC 503) made it clear that applications for entry certificates and letters of consent must be made outside the common travel area.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Car Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to which publicly owned car manufacturers in the European Economic Community are currently making *(a)* losses and *(b)* profits; what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that cars sold by these manufacturers in the United Kingdom are not being sold below the cost of production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: We do not have detailed information about the current financial performance of publicly owned car manufacturers in the EC.

More generally, however, in their most recently published annual results Renault, SEAT, Austin Rover, General Motors Europe and Peugeot reported losses; while Fiat, BMW, Volkswagen, Daimler-Benz, Porsche, Jaguar and Ford (UK) announced profits. (In some cases other operations in addition to cars are included; and these companies are not all publicly owned.)

We are not aware of any evidence to suggest that the cars produced by EC manufacturers are being sold in the United Kingdom below production cost.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether Her Majesty's Government have any proposals to give greater protection to individuals paying in advance for goods and services.

Mr. Howard: I have no further such proposals in mind. The special provisions in the Insolvency Act 1985 on the potential disqualification and personal liability of directors responsible for wrongful trading, which came into force last week (28 April), will give greater protection to individuals paying in advance for goods and services. The Government consider that these provisions will achieve the necessary balance but would be prepared to re-examine the need for further action if experience of the effectiveness of these provisions indicates that this is necessary.

I also take the view that action by the trade to improve existing protective schemes and to establish new voluntary schemes, in the ways suggested by the Director General of Fair Trading in his recent report on "The Protection of Consumer Prepayments", will be an effective means of achieving greater protection.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate Her Majesty's Government have made of the effect of exchange rate stability on exporters and on importers; what proportion of United Kingdom imports and exports of manufactured goods are traded with European Monetary System countries; and what is the balance of trade in manufactures with such countries.

Mr. Butcher: None, although a number of studies by outside bodies have examined the impact of exchange rate variability on trade flows. In 1985 the countries of the European monetary system accounted for 39 per cent. of our exports and 52 per cent. of our imports of manufactures. The balance of trade in manufactures with these countries showed a deficit of £8 billion.

Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the volume and value of imports of finished manufactures each year since 1970 and this year to date on the basis of current weights; and if he will provide the same figure for exports.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

Finished manufactures
OTS basis
Volume Index (current weighted, 1980 = 100)

	Imports £ million	*Exports £ million*	*Imports*	*Exports*
1970	2,091	4,050	36·4	71·0
1971	2,452	4,735	40·6	77·3
1972	3,155	4,972	49·1	75·6
1973	4,665	5,951	62·2	83·1
1974	5,602	7,584	63·1	88·9
1975	6,769	10,066	62·5	93·4
1976	8,957	12,561	66·1	96·1
1977	11,480	15,590	74·1	99·4
1978	14,012	16,989	83·0	96·2
1979	16,995	18,197	99·0	95·8
1980	17,696	20,776	100·0	100·0
1981	19,460	21,505	102·7	95·8
1982	23,083	23,253	112·6	96·0
1983	27,971	24,138	125·1	91·7
1984	33,241	28,476	137·5	100·7
1985	37,037	32,681	144·5	108·2
*1986	9,247	7,963	142·4	102·6

* First quarter, seasonally adjusted.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in which quarters since 1970 the terms of trade for finished manufactures have been higher than in the three months ended February 1986.

Mr. Butcher: The terms of trade index for finished manufactures in the three months ending February 1986

was 102·7 (1980 = 100). The index was higher in the first quarter of 1981 (103·2) and the fourth quarter of 1985 (103·3).

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1970 the United Kingdom relative export prices shown in table F3 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" using current trade weights: and if he will give his estimate for the most recent quarter.

Mr. Alan Clark: Data in respect of 1985 are still incomplete. The figures based on 1984 weights are in the table:

*United Kingdom Relative Export Prices**

Year	
1970	79·3
1971	80·8
1972	80·9
1973	74·7
1974	73·2
1975	78·0
1976	74·9
1977	79·7
1978	83·8
1979	90·4
1980	100·0
1981	97·2
1982	91·3
1983	88·4
1984	86·5
Q3 1985	93·4

* The United Kingdom Export Unit Value index for manufactures divided by the weighted average of the unit value indices of competitors' exports of manufactures, both expressed in a common currency 1984 weights have been used.

BL (Corporate Plan)

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current position on BL's corporate plan.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Following his appointment as chairman on 1 May, the Government will be reviewing with Mr. Graham Day the development of corporate plans for BL's businesses.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received on the multi-fibre arrangement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Recently I have received representations from a number of hon. Members and others concerned with the interests of the United Kingdom textiles and clothing industries; of those in Hong Kong; and of the developing countries.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has made a further assessment since the Silberston report of the effect on *(a)* jobs and *(b)* profitability of an abandonment of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Alan Clark: No further study of the economic effects of the multi-fibre arrangement has been commissioned by the Government since the report prepared by Professor Silberston, but others have studied the effects of the MFA on particular interests and on the economy as a whole. I consider all views with interest.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each have been paid.

Mr. Butcher: The advertising agencies employed on Department of Trade and Industry campaigns over the last five years, and the sums paid to them, are as follows:

Amount paid in financial year

Agency	£
1981-82	
Freeman Mathews Milne	257,614
Doyle Dane Bernbach	270,083
Roles & Parker	165,648
J Walter Thompson	131,002
Charles Barker (recruitment)	40,395
J Walter Thompson	129,300
Doyle Dane Bernbach	369,088
Freeman Mathews Milne	455,885
Roles & Parker	132,637
Wight Collins Rutherford Scott	936,813
Charles Barker (recruitment)	45,436
Dewe Rogerson	485,000
Hilton Advertising	
1983-84	
Charles Barker (recruitment)	37,830
Dorland	2,261
J Walter Thompson	17,802
Doyle Dane Bernbach	105,607
Wight Collins Rutherford Scott	18,879
Roles & Parker	501,795
Freeman Mathews Treasure	164,897
1984-85	
Charles Barker (recruitment)	58,786
David Tolson	494,892
Industrial Publicity Services	220,173
J Walter Thompson	216,717
Doyle Dane Bernbach	134,155
Young & Rubicam	9,709
Wight Collins Rutherford Scott	253,561
Roles & Parker	5,188
Ayer Barker	6,728
Dorland	383
1985-86	
Doyle Dane Bernbach	63,806
Ayer Barker	44,416
J Walter Thompson	50,297
Dorland	10,327
Leo Burnett	900
Industrial Publicity Services	90,549
Valin Pollen	200,376
David Tolson	$978,463
Charles Barker (recruitment)	105,995

Indo-Rail Exhibition (Jakarta)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on which date his Department received notice from the organisers of the Indo-Rail Exhibition in Jakarta held on 16 to 19 April last; what action was taken; and for what reasons no support was offered to participants from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: The organisers of the Indo-Rail exhibition notified my Department of the event in a letter to the British Overseas Trade Board dated 2 December.

Our Embassy in Jakarta, with whom the organisers were in contact, were informed on 5 December that because BOTB resources for support of exporters at overseas trade fairs in 1986-87 were already fullly allocated and a substantial reserve list existed, it was unlikely that it would be possible to provide support for a United Kingdom group at Indo-Rail, should the trade association concerned (Railways Industries Association) make an application. This position was confirmed when a representative of the organisers attended a meeting at the BOTB on 8 January.

Mergers

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the average length of time taken by the Office of Fair Trading before deciding whether to advise him to refer a proposed merger to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Howard: The Director General of Fair Trading would normally expect to advise my right hon. Friend within three to four weeks of his Office being given all the necessary information. The length of time may vary however, depending on the urgency or complexity of the case. In the case of public offers for shares the Director General normally aims to advise my right hon. Friend in time for a decision to be announced on or before the first closing date for the offer.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to require bidders to display the commercial logic and benefit to consumers and employees of mergers and takeover bids under consideration by the Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Howard: Such considerations as the motivation and plans of the companies, and the effects on consumers and employment, are among the factors taken into account under current procedures. In assessing whether a merger or merger proposal raises public interest issues which deserve further investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, the Director General of Fair Trading considers all aspects of the merger. In deciding whether to refer a merger or merger proposal to the MMC, in the light of the advice of the Director General, my right hon. Friend also takes into account all the relevant circumstances.

Export Credit

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, further to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, column *252*, if he will publish the correspondence with the European Economic Commission concerning United Kingdom practice on interest rates for export credit.

Mr. Alan Clark: There has been no written correspondence recently with the European Commission on this matter.

Ultraleisure

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, further to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, column *253*, what information was available to Export Credits Guarantee Department officials as to the final destination of the Ultraleisure export contracts referred to; and what advice on the formation of Ultraleisure's Swiss subsidiary was offered by his officials.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Ultraleisure contracts referred to are currently the subject of police investigations. In these circumstances it would not be appropriate for me to give the information requested.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry under which European Economic Community regulation or directive the figure of 35 per cent. for population within the United Kingdom that may obtain European regional development fund funding was laid down; if this percentage is still in force; and if he will make a statement on its application to the county of Devon.

Mr. Butcher: The main regulation governing the European regional development fund (1787/84) provides that the regions or areas where fund assistance may be given to projects or to national programmes of Community interest are limited to those aided areas established by member states in applying their systems of regional aids. No European Community instrument lays down a specific limit for the percentage of the United Kingdom population that may obtain this assistance. Proposals to grant regional industrial aid need to be accepted by the European Commission under articles 92-4 of the Treaty of Rome. The United Kingdom Government reviewed the map of assisted areas in Great Britain in 1984. The Government then had reason to believe that a proposal to make the map cover more than 35 per cent. of the working population would probably lead to difficulties with the Commission. The Government took this into account when reaching their decisions on the map. These decisions were notified to the Commission, which raised no objection. As a consequence of the Government's decision in 1984 the areas in Devon which are eligible for this aid from the fund are those parts of the county which are within the travel-to-work areas of Plymouth and Bude.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now reverse the 1979 decision not to name the companies covered under the European Economic Community code of conduct for companies operating in South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: All companies known or believed to have interests covered by the reporting requirements of the European Community code of conduct have been listed in the annexes to the Department's annual analysis and summary of company reports since the code's adoption.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many erratum notes were dispatched from his Department in respect of his Department's code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa, analysis and summary of companies report 1 July 1984 to 30 June 1985; if he is satisfied that efforts have been made to ensure that all recipients of the original report have received a copy of the erratum note; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Department has distributed some 300 copies of an erratum note, sufficient to ensure that all recorded recipients of the original report are advised of the correction.

Shipbuilding (Aid)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide a table on the same basis as the answer of 8 November 1982, *Official Report*, column *71*, showing the aid to shipbuilding and shipowners in EEC countries, Japan, South Korea and Brazil.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following is the current information on merchant shipbuilding support:

Direct Aid to Shipbuilding	*Home Credit Scheme Aid to Shipowners*
United Kingdom	
Up to 22½ per cent. of contract price (includes 2 per cent. Shipbuilders Relief)	80 per cent. over eight and a half years at 7½ per cent. (on orders placed in United Kingdom yards only)
Belgium	
Nil	80 per cent. over 15 years. Interest relief subsidy (maximum three percentage points)
Denmark	
Nil	80 per cent. over 14 years at 8 per cent. interest including four years grace period
France	
(Arrangements still awaiting Commission approval)	Eight and a half years at 7½ per cent. interest
Germany	
Nil	12½ per cent. investment grant; 2 per cent. interest subsidy. (The Investment Grant automatically reduces the amount of credit to which the Interest Subsidy applies.) Credit Guarantees at OECD terms
Ireland	
Nil	Nil (capacity now closed)
Italy	
Up to 25 per cent. of contract price	80 per cent. over eight and a half years at 7½ per cent. interest. Investment aid payable at 2·75 per cent. of contract price half-yearly for 12 years
Netherlands	
Up to 7 per cent. of contract price	80 per cent. over eight and a half years at minimum of 8 per cent. interest plus subsidy of not more than 2 per cent. of the interest rate
Finland	
Nil	80 per cent. over period of construction (at least two years normally not more than eight years at 11 per cent. interest)
Japan	
Nil	Government (Japan Development Bank) loan of 50-60 per cent. over 13 years at 7½ per cent. interest including three years grace period and eight years in the case of commercial banks
Norway	
Nil	80 per cent. of contract price over eight and a half years at 7 per cent.
Spain	
Up to 19 per cent. of contract price	85 per cent. over 12 years at 8 per cent. interest with up to two years grace period
Sweden	
Nil	90 per cent. of contract price over 12 years at 8·95 per cent.

	Direct Aid to Shipbuilding	*Home Credit Scheme Aid to Shipowners*
South Korea	Nil	80 per cent. over eight and a half years at 8 per cent. interest
Brazil	Home owners 40 per cent.	Export 90 per cent. over 10 years at 7½ per cent. Home 85 per cent. over 12 years, including four years grace, at 6 per cent.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been paid out in shipbuilding intervention fund assistance in each year since the fund was established.

Mr. Butcher: Payments made from the shipbuilding intervention fund during each financial year since its inception are as follows:

Financial Year	*£ million*
1976-77	1·4
1977-78	19·3
1978-79	10·8
1979-80	31·9
1980-81	41·9
1981-82	49·1
1982-83	47·9
1983-84	36·2
1984-85	20·1
1985-86	25·9

It should be noted that actual expenditure from the intervention fund is geared to the contractual payment stages during the course of construction figures for offers of assistance are published in the annual report on the Industrial Development Act 1982.

Intervention Fund

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place in the Library Her Majesty's Government's submission for the new negotiations on intervention fund support.

Mr. Butcher: Discussions between the European Commission and Member States on the successor to the fifth Directive on Shipbuilding Aids are at a preliminary stage. The matter is next to be discussed at the Council of Industry Ministers on 9 June; but the Commission has yet to make proposals on the basis of which negotiations can begin. It is not of the nature of these negotiations for member states to make formal submissions to the Commission; but I can assure the hon. Member that we shall seek an aid regime with the interests of United Kingdom shipbuilders fully in mind.

United States Export Regulations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he had with the United States authorities on his recent visit to the United States of America about *(a)* the attempted enforcement of United States export regulations in the United Kingdom, *(b)* the case of Systime plc, *(c)* the restraints on EEC internal trade implicit in the United States distribution licence arrangements and *(d)* the question of a secure supply of software and maintenance for existing United Kingdom users of computers of United States origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: During my visit, I made clear to the United States Secretary of Commerce our continuing strong objections to extraterritorial United States re-export controls. I referred similarly to the extraterritorial aspects of the new distribution licence regulations. The United States authorities are well aware of our views on Systime's alleged violations of United States re-export controls, and on the cutting off of United States supplies to United Kingdom firms who refuse to give re-export undertakings.

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all new orders won by each yard in British Shipbuilders, by month, since January 1985 and the contract delivery dates.

Mr. Butcher: The following is the information:

Month of order	*BS yard*	*Vessel*	*Contract delivery dates*
January 1985	Ailsa	2×oilrig supply vessels	March 1986
			April 1986
February 1985	A & P	2×cargo vessels	September 1986
			December 1986
	Ailsa	1× Fishery research vessel	September 1986
	Goven	1×passenger RO/RO Ferry	March 1987
			February 1986
			June 1986
			September 1986
	Smiths Dock	4×3D King 15 cargo vessels	December 1986
March 1985	Sunderland	1×Crane Ship	March 1987
April 1985	A & P	1× N/P Pontoon Barge	September 1985
	A & P	1×N/P Pontoon Barge	November 1985

Month of order	BS yard	Vessel	Contract delivery dates
May 1985	Appledore	1×Trailing Suction Hoppoer Dredger	September 1986
September 1985	Appledore	1×Trailing Suction Hopper Dredger	July 1987
February 1986	A & P	1×N/P Barge	December 1986

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which public sector orders, to be awarded in 1986, and for which British Shipbuilders is able to tender, have been notified to his Department.

Mr. Butcher: I am aware of the following orders that are likely to be placed in 1986:

—A fisheries protection vessel for the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Scotland of some 3,380 cgt.

—A passenger/vehicle ferry for Caledonian MacBrayne of some 5,500 cgt.

—An inter-island passenger/vehicle ferry for the Orkney Islands Council of some 500 cgt.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements he proposes for redundancy payments after 31 December for employees of British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Butcher: The statutory shipbuilding redundancy payments scheme was extended to 31 December 1986 by the Shipbuilding Act 1985. The Government consider that a further extension is inappropriate because there should be parity between public and private sectors by having no statutory scheme for either. British Shipbuilders and Harland and Wolff are examining the format of successor schemes. Schemes for private sector yards are for negotiation between managements and their work force.

United Kingdom-United States Trade Relations

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in view of the decision of the governor of Washington State to cancel a trade mission to the United Kingdom because of the alleged risks to visitors to Britain from terrorism, whether he is taking any steps to safeguard and promote United Kingdom/United States trade relations.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department actively promotes British trade with the United States, and will continue to do so despite the regrettable concellation of this visit.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the effect on British trade with the Eastern bloc of United Kingdom involvement in the strategic defence initiative research programme, and in particular, of American concern to limit the transfer of technology.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 May 1986, c. *453*]: I am not aware of any effect on British trade with the Eastern bloc as a result of the United Kingdom's involvement in the strategic defence initiative. My Department will continue to keep the position under review.

Toys

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the current definition of toy in the Toy (Safety) Regulations 1974; if he will extend it to include any article which because of its size or appearance could be mistaken for a child's plaything; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 May 1986, c. *526*.]: The current definition is generally satisfactory. But I am aware that some goods, which would not meet the requirements of the Toys (Safety) Regulations 1974 because of sharp spikes or edges, excessive lead in paint or other reasons, are being supplied as novelties, collectors' items, figurines, executive toys, decorations or similar descriptions and that they are technically legal although likely to be played with by children. One of the benefits of the general safety requirement for consumer goods proposed in our White Paper (Cmnd. 9302) is that it will do much to close this loophole.

The definition of toy may be amended once the EC proposal for a toy safety directive is adopted by member states. This amendment may be a marginal improvement. I am considering the extent to which a definition along the lines of that proposed, would make a contribution to reducing the dangers to which children may be exposed.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

British Citizens Abroad (Hostages)

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens are currently held hotage abroad *(a)* by Governments and *(b)* by others; in which countries they are held; and what representations have been made in these cases by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Eggar: Two Britons, Mr. Alec Collett and Mr. John McCarthy have been abducted by terrorist groups in the Lebanon. Their precise whereabouts are unknown. Representations on their behalf have been made to several Governments in the Middle East and to other groups and organisations which may be in a position to help.

Hong Kong (GATT)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the recognition of Hong Kong as a general agreement on tariffs and trade contracting party has been accepted by all general agreement on tariffs and trade members.

Mr. Renton: Following declarations to the GATT secretariat by the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China on 23 April, the secretariat informed contracting parties that Hong Kong had become a contracting party as from that date. The procedure did not require the approval of other GATT members.

Hong Kong

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the state of further education in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Hong Kong Government continue to make satisfactory progress in providing further education to meet the territory's professional manpower needs and Hong Kong students' aspirations. The recent decisions of the Hong Kong Government to establish a third university, and to increase the numbers of the places available in the existing universities and other institutes of higher education, will ensure that the long-term targets for further education continue to be met.

North Atlantic Assembly

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the United Kingdom parliamentary delegation to the North Atlantic Assembly.

Mr. Eggar: The following represent the United Kingdom at the North Atlantic Assembly:

Sir Patrick Wall MP (Leader)
Mr. Robert Banks MP
Sir Peter Emery MP
Sir Philip Goodhart MP
Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith MP
Mr. Robert McCrindle MP
Sir Julian Ridsdale MP
Mr. Peter Viggers MP
Mr. Jerry Wiggin MP
Earl of Kimberley
Earl de la Warr
Dr. David Clark MP
Mr. Patrick Duffy MP
Mr. Bruce George MP
Mr. Kevin McNamara MP
Lord Ardwick
The right honourable Lord Mayhew
Mr. John Cartwright MP

My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) is an alternate member of the delegation.

EMPLOYMENT

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each has been paid.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In this period, four agencies have handled campaigns by my Department. These were Freeman Mathews and Treasure (previously Freeman Mathews and Milne), Charles Barker and Sons Ltd., Davidson Pearce Ltd. and Industrial Publicity Service Ltd.

The sums which have been paid to these agencies are:

	£
1981-82	
Freeman Mathews and Milne	357,533
Charles Barker	9,445
1982-83	
Freeman Mathews and Milne	476,065
Charles Barker	4,496
1983-84	
Freeman Mathews and Treasure	17,522
Charles Barker	1,395
Davidson Pearce	459,966
1984-85	
Davidson Pearce	7,346
1985-86	
Davidson Pearce	82,300
Industrial Publicity Service	110,179

This exludes some details of minor expenditure on miscellaneous advertising, such as local recruitment, which would be available only at disproportionate cost.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each has been paid.

Mr. Eggar: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has engaged the following advertising agencies during the past five years:

Financial Years

	1981-82 £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £
Charles Barker Recruitment, London	10,564	19,152	49,449	45,862	93,591
Whites Recruitment Ltd, London Riley Recruitment Ltd, Glasgow	162,821	125,564	121,445	116,541	178,056
PA Advertising, London	—	—	—	—	2,000
T G Scott & Sons, London	—	—	—	—	418

Central Regional Council

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Paymaster General what action has been taken to ensure that the Central regional council submits accurate returns for the census of employment in future; if he will estimate the effect of previous inaccurate returns on the published unemployment figures for the Stirling constituency; and if he will indicate the extent to which this affected the Stirling constituency's eligibility for regional assistance.

Mr. Lang: Arrangements have been made to allocate the employees of Central regional council to their correct districts for the 1984 census of employment. My officials have also arranged for the council to be given advance warning of the need to provide sufficiently detailed information to allow employees to be correctly classified in the forthcoming 1986 census.

If allowances are made for the inaccuracies in the 1981 census, resulting from the Central regional council's return, the unemployment rate for Stirling travel-to-work area is estimated at 14·4 per cent. for March 1986. The current published figure is 11·9 per cent. Unemployment rates were only one of several factors taken into consideration in deciding assisted area status. I am advised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade

and Industry that the errors made were insufficient to have altered the decision that Stirling travel-to-work area should not be included in the assisted area map.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to the answer of 28 April to the right hon. Member for the Western Isles, *Official Report*, column *338*, he will give percentage unemployed figures for each area concerned.

Mr. Lang: The available percentage rates are given in the reply in column *338*. The percentage unemployment rates (at 6 March 1986) for the areas in the answer in column *339* are:

	Percentage
England	13·1
Scotland	15·9
Wales	17·3
Northern Ireland	21·4

This information is available in the Library.

Prison Officers (Earnings)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to the reply of 30 April to the hon. Member for Leicester, East, *Official Report*, column *423*, he will publish in the *Official Report* such information as is available to him about prison officers' salaries and overtime earnings in respect of the period since the data were collected for the new earnings survey report for 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: In July 1985 the April 1985 pay settlement of 4·98 per cent. for prison officers was implemented. This settlement was not included in the 1985 new earnings survey results.

Keyboard Ltd.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Paymaster General how many representations he has received about the adequacy of the training given under the YTS to young people by the firm Keyboard Ltd., also known as Keyscot; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have received no representations about the adequacy of the training provided by Keyboard Ltd. in Scotland. However, on 11 April 1986 the Manpower Services Commission gave Keyboard Productivity (Scotland) Ltd. one month's notice of termination of its YTS contract and closure of its scheme, on the ground of its inability to continue to deliver training of the required quality.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Visitors

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of visitors to Northern Ireland in 1985 who stayed overnight; and what was the highest number of such visitors in a calendar year between 1956 and 1969.

Dr. Boyson: The Northern Ireland tourist board's preliminary estimate of staying visitors in 1985 is 863,000. The highest number of tourists was 1,139,000 recorded in 1968.

Hotels

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland during the past 10 years *(a)* how many new hotels in Northern Ireland were opened, *(b)* how many new beds they provided, *(c)* how many hotels were closed and *(d)* how many beds were lost in the same period.

Dr. Boyson: The information required is as follows:

1976-1985	*Number*	*Rooms*
New hotels opened	17	362
Hotels closed	29	991

EC Regional Development Fund

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total amount received in Northern Ireland from the first programme of the non-quota section of the European Community regional development fund by *(a)* shipbuilding districts and *(b)* border districts.

Dr. Boyson: Under the first shipbuilding measure, some £1·7 million was made available to Northern Ireland, of which £1·1 million has been received to date.

The first border areas measure made available some £4·5 million of which £2·8 million has so far been received.

Final claims under both measures, which expired at the end of 1985, will be submitted to the Commission during the current year.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each has been paid.

Mr. Scott: The total amount paid by the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments are as follows:

	£
1981-82	1,314,000
1982-83	1,118,000
1983-84	2,479,000
1984-85	1,800,000
1985-86	2,380,000

I shall be writing to the hon. Member shortly with the further details requested.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why there is a divergence in the figures given by Her Majesty's Government and those given by the Royal Ulster Constabulary in 1985 for explosions and for firearms and weapons incidents.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Intimidation

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) following acts of intimidation against the security forces since 1 March *(a)* how many people have been arrested, *(b)* how many people have been charged and *(c)* what the charges were; and if there have been any resulting convictions;

(2) how many acts of intimidation were carried out against members of the security forces by *(a)* Loyalist groups, and *(b)* non-Loyalist groups since 1 March;

(3) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing how many acts of intimidation have been reported against members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve full-time and the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve part-time, while they were off duty, detailing specifically *(a)* whether these acts involved petrol bombs, stonings, shootings, *(b)* when property was damaged and to what extent, *(c)* when people were injured, and how severe those injuries were, *(d)* where the incidents took place and *(e)* whether they were during the day or the night, since 1 March.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Security Forces (Re-housing)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the security forces have *(a)* requested to be re-housed following acts of intimidation, and *(b)* been re-housed since 1 March; and on what basis any requests have been turned down.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the reply of 1 May to the hon. Member for Leicester, East, how many members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary have applied to transfer to other police forces in Great Britain in each of the past three years and in 1986 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) on 17 April 1986, at column *470*.

NORAID

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he or Ministers in his Department have on visits to the United States of America made representations to the United States Government to take legal or legislative steps against the NORAID organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 April 1986, c. *202*]: Representations have been made on many occasions about support from United States citizens to terrorists in Northern Ireland. The United States Government have made clear their opposition to groups who give support to terrorists, and in particular have taken vigorous action against those who supply weapons. I am grateful for their co-operation.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Further Education

2. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to increase the advanced further education pool for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will determine the advanced further education pool for 1987-88 in the context of the Government's plans for local authority spending in 1987-88 which will be announced later in the year.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

12. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress his Department has made in discussions with the teacher unions relating to the viability of his timetable for the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education examination.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend has expressed to all the teachers' associations his willingness to receive any further and detailed comments they may have about the preparation for and funding of the introduction of the GCSE. The Department stands ready to consider these matters further.

26. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on progress with the implementation of the general certificate of seconday education examination.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

34. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received asking for the new general certificate of secondary education examination to be delayed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since the beginning of the year, the Department has received some 1,200 letters from various bodies and individuals requesting that the GCSE be delayed. The measures announced by my right hon. Friend on 13 March are designed to ensure the successful completion of the training programme and to allow authorities to fund a real increase in books and equipment for the GCSE and thus meet the real concerns expressed by those who have made representations.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning his decision to continue with the implementation of the new general certificate of secondary education examination.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery).

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total amount of extra expenditure so far incurred in preparation for the general certificate of secondary education examination; and what is his estimate of the amount of extra expenditure which will be required for this examination in the next three years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department is making a substantial contribution towards the cost of the special programme of in-service training for the introduction of the GCSE: it is supporting £8 million expenditure on supplying cover for teachers attending training seminars; and has given over £1 million to the Secondary Examinations Council and GCSE examining groups towards the cost of providing introductory training. The Government will also be giving £600,000 to the GCSE examining groups to assist with the provision of further syllabus-specific training from September onwards.

It is genuinely difficult for the Department or the local education authorities to quantify the costs of introducing GCSE. In response to representations by local education authorities and many others for more help with resources, my right hon. Friend has proposed supporting £20 million of expenditure by education support grant to help secondary schools purchase necessary additional books and equipment. This amount is in addition to the resources which local authorities may otherwise allocate for the GCSE. The Government's expenditure plans for 1986-87 provide scope for authorities to redeploy their resources towards policies to which they wish to give priority, such as the GCSE. When considering the level of local authority expenditure on education in 1987-88, the Government will take account of the representations of the local authority associations and teachers' associations on the resource implications of GCSE.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the latest progress of his discussions with teachers' unions about the general certificate of secondary education examination.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend met representatives of the National Union of Teachers on 16 April to discuss the planning and preparations for the introduction of the GCSE. He will be having discussions with representatives of the National Association of Head Teachers today on the same topic and expects to have further discussions with the NUT later this month. My right hon. Friend and I have said that we stand ready to discuss these important issues with any or all of the teachers' associations. We hope that all concerned will work together to ensure that the introduction of the GCSE this autumn is the success that it deserves to be.

Universities (Freedom of Speech)

18. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals to discuss the protection of freedom of speech in universities.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend held a meeting on 17 February with representatives of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals during which they had a useful exchange of views on the subject of freedom of speech and the guidance issued by the committee last December. The Government have welcomed the chairman's subsequent letter reaffirming that the guidance is intended to convey that meetings should be cancelled by institutions only in the most exceptional circumstances and normally after consultation with the police.

Aberdeen University

19. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about additional support for students studying at Aberdeen university.

Mr. Walden: A small number of letters have been received seeking additional support for Aberdeen students.

School Buildings

20. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the survey of schools building improvement needs to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Local education authorities were asked to return completed forms for the schools in the survey to the Department by 1 April. Those forms which have been received are being processed. However, as the majority of forms have not yet been returned, it is not possible to say when the survey will be completed.

27. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received on the state of buildings in schools.

43. **Mr. Garrett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received on the state of buildings in schools.

Mr. Dunn: The state of school buildings was discussed at the February meeting of NEDC, which my right hon. Friend attended. Representations have also been made recently to my right hon. Friend and me by hon. Members and others.

Teachers' Dispute

22. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will invite Her Majesty's Inspectorate to carry out an assessment of the effect upon schools and children of the continuing teachers' dispute.

Sir Keith Joseph: Her Majesty's inspectors' concern in their routine and specialist visits to schools is to observe and, in the case of full inspections, to report on the quality of education provided and the standards achieved by the pupils. In the past year, some schools inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors' will have been affected by the teachers' dispute. Where the action taken appeared to be impinging upon quality and standards in the school, this will be commented upon in the published Her Majesty's Inspectorates' report.

24. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the continuing industrial action being taken by the teachers.

36. **Mr. Haselhurst** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what reports he has received about the level of continuing disruption in schools, as a result of industrial action by teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: I very much regret that disruption — itself, in my view, wrong and unprofessional — continues in schools in England and Wales despite the recent 8·5 per cent. pay increase and the talks now taking place under the independent panel appointed by ACAS. In

the circumstances all teachers should certainly now be working normally. For its part, the NUT should reverse its policy of causing disruption, abide by the ACAS agreement of January, and join in the ACAS-assisted talks. I continue to receive information from Her Majesty's inspectors and others about disruption and its effects. Examples of continuing disruption include refusal to cover for absent colleagues; refusal to attend staff meetings or meetings with parents; and refusal to take part in curriculum development.

35. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service discussions on teachers' pay and conditions.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

Education (Politicisation)

23. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received any further representations about his draft circular on politics in schools.

Sir Keith Joseph: Thirty-five letters have been received in response to the draft circular and statement of principles issued on 4 February. Substantive replies are still awaited from seven of the organisations directly consulted.

56. **Mr. Key** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many complaints he has received in the last 12 months about the improper political use of schools; how many such complaints have had sufficient detail to be investigated; and whether he is prepared to investigate such complaints confidentially.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the last 12 months about 70 letters expressing concern about the treatment of politically controversial issues have been received in the Department. Of these, 12 contained sufficient detail for further inquiries to have been made. My right hon. Friend is certainly willing to have complaints investigated if they contain specific details of the incidents concerned, including the name of the school, the date and as much other information as possible; if requested, the name of the person complaining will certainly be kept confidential.

Higher Education

25. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had in the last month with the National Advisory Body and the University Grants Committee about the future development of higher education.

31. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had in the last month with the National Advisory Body and the University Grants Committee about the future of higher education.

40. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent discussions he has had with the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education and the University Grants Committee about student numbers.

42. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had in the last month with the National Advisory Body and the University Grants Committee about the future development of higher education.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Members to the answer given earlier today to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett).

30. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects final proposals from the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education for the academic year 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: Assuming the National Advisory Body for public sector higher education (NAB) adheres to its timetable of previous years, in early December. NAB's advice to my right hon. Friend about the disposition of target student numbers and the allocation of the advanced further education pool and the voluntary colleges' quantum is for the forthcoming financial year; thus NAB's recommendations for 1987-88 will cover the first two terms of the 1987-88 academic year.

37. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to give a decision on the proposals by Manchester City education authority in relation to tertiary education provision.

Mr. Dunn: These were approved on 22 April 1986.

41. **Mr. Foulkes** asked asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representation he has had in the last month from higher education unions about the future of higher education.

50. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had in the last month from higher education unions about the future of higher education.

51. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had in the last month from higher education unions about the future of higher education.

53. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had in the last month from higher education unions about the future of higher education.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend and I met representatives of the Association of University Teachers on 9 April; we discussed the pay of academic staff and university funding. On 29 April I met representatives of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff and discussed a variety of issues affecting their members employed in higher education institutions. Representatives of the Association of Principals of Colleges met me on 23 April, with others, to discuss the Green Paper "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s."

Schools (Midday Supervision)

28. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of pupils live in areas where the local education authority has not yet applied for Government assistance with lunchtime supervision.

Mr. Dunn: Seven per cent. of full-time pupils in maintained primary, secondary and special schools in England are registered at the schools of authorities which have not yet applied, in respect of either 1985-86 or 1986-87, for education support grant payable for or in connection with the purpose of securing the supervision of pupils in schools at midday.

Nursery Education

29. **Mr. Barnett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the availability of nursery education.

32. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the availability of nursery education.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes).

Schools (Vandalism and Theft)

33. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the annual cost of vandalism to, and theft from, schools.

Mr. Chris Patten: Information about the cost of vandalism and theft in schools is not collected centrally. I accept that the problem is a serious one, and the Department has commissioned a one-year research study to assess the extent and cost of vandalism and to suggest cost-effective and practical solutions.

Teachers (Initial Training)

38. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of initial teacher training courses has been monitored by the Council for the Assessment of Teachers' Education.

Mr. Walden: The Secretaries of State have asked the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education to review all existing approved courses of initial teacher training and to scrutinise any proposals for new courses for which an allocation of intake places has been made. Such courses are currently provided at 96 institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. So far the council has considered the courses at 28—approximately one third—of these institutions.

School Books

39. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Educational Publishers Association on the provision of books in schools.

49. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Educational Publishers Association on the provision of books in schools.

54. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Educational Publishers Association on the provision of books in schools.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron).

48. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out for primary and secondary schools the average expenditure on books and equipment per pupil for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Dunn: The information is as follows:

Expenditure on books and equipment per pupil—England

	Primary Schools		*Secondary Schools*	
	£ (cash)	*£ (1984-85 prices)**	*£ (cash)*	*£ (1984-85 prices)**
1975-76	9·60	24·36	18·58	47·18
1976-77	10·57	23·69	20·17	45·24
1977-78	11·45	22·53	21·35	42·05
1978-79	12·85	22·88	24·40	43·44
1979-80	14·33	21·84	26·61	40·53
1980-81	16·05	20·58	29·26	37·51
1981-82	18·16	21·18	32·18	37·53
1982-83	20·90	22·79	36·53	39·82
1983-84	22·79	23·77	39·21	40·89
1984-85	23·55	23·55	42·53	42·53

* The cash figures for the earlier years have been repriced to 1984-85 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

Teacher Training

44. **Mr. Harris** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the estimated cost to local education authorities of in-service teacher training.

Mr. Chris Patten: £24 million of LEA expenditure is eligible this financial year for support from the specific grant scheme for in-service training for certain national priority purposes; the grant rate is 90 per cent. and the balance falls to the individual authority. Local education authorities may also pool certain costs of in-service training; the total expenditure eligible for pooling support is estimated at £80 million to £85 million in this financial year. The proportion of expenditure which may be pooled is 75 or 100 per cent. depending on category: the balance falls to the individual training authority. LEA expenditure under the TVEI-related in-service training scheme (TRIST) is met in full by the Manpower Services Commission; there is no residual cost to the authority. The Department does not collect information about the cost to LEAs of in-service training activities not supported by these arrangements.

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools (Report)

45. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive the report of Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools for 1985.

Sir Keith Joseph: I hope to receive the next report by Her Majesty's inspectors on the effects of local authority expenditure policies on education provision in England in time for it to be published towards the end of May.

Universities (Freedom of Speech)

46. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consultations he has had with the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics on their proposals for the protection of free speech and freedom of assembly.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has received a copy of the code of practice on freedom of speech and lawful assembly which the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics published at the end of last week. He has not yet had time to consider whether the code raises points that he would wish to discuss with the committee.

School Closures

47. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what factors he takes into account when considering applications for school closures.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend considers all school proposals on their merits, taking into account all relevant educational, social and financial factors, including statutory objections made by local government electors.

Mathematics, Engineering and Science

52. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers have been trained in each of the last 10 years in mathematics, engineering and science.

Mr. Walden: It is not possible to give the number of teachers trained in engineering as this subject specialism is not identified for students from further education teacher training centres. Available information for successful student teachers trained for the secondary phase is as follows:

Year	*Subject specialism*		*England and Wales*
	Mathematics	*Science†*	*Total secondary phase*
1983			
Public sector	478	587	5,292
UDEs	*	*	*
1984			
Public sector	362	382	4,162
UDEs	568	958	3,898
1985			
Public sector	312	335	3,604
UDEs	519	874	3,721

* Not available.

† Includes physics, chemistry, biological sciences and combined integrated or general science.

60. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students are currently engaged in engineering, mathematics and science-related courses of study; what were the corresponding numbers in 1978-79; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The information is given in the following table. The Government's policy is to encourage a continuing shift in emphasis towards higher education courses in these subjects.

Great Britain: Higher education student numbers

Academic year	*1978-79*			*1984-85*		
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Total*
Engineering and technology	75,300	43,600	118,900	87,700	65,800	153,600
Sciences	82,600	17,800	100,400	108,400	20,500	128,900
of which mathematics	19,000	4,900	23,900	30,900	7,300	38,200

School Meals

55. **Mr. Dobson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the nutritional value of school meals.

Mr. Dunn: None.

Animal Diseases (Research)

57. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the report on "Animal Diseases Research" by Professor Biggs, as described in the press statement by the Agriculture and Food Research Council, September 1985, has yet been received; whether it will be published; and what conclusions were drawn by Professor Biggs regarding the future of Houghton Poultry Research Station.

Mr. Walden: Professor Biggs' report was received by the Agricultural and Food Research Council in January 1986. I understand that it is not the council's intention to publish the report, but that it will be used by the council in determining future policy for animals disease research. The report reviews options for the organisation of this research, but contains no specific conclusions or recommendations on the long term future of the Houghton poultry research station.

Expenditure and Examination Results

58. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he makes any assessment of the correlation between expenditure per pupil in schools and examination results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Statistical Bulletin 13/84 "School Standards and Spending: statistical analysis" presented an analysis of the statistical associations between the examination attainments of maintained school leavers in a local education authority, and measures of socio-economic background and broad-based school and resource variables.

The analysis showed that certain measures of socio-economic background were highly associated statistically with examination achievements, and there were much smaller, but statistically significant, correlations with other explanatory variables including measures of teaching and non-teaching expenditure per pupil. In three of the six attainment measures tested, teaching expenditure was found to be positively associated with achievement and in two of these cases non-teaching expenditure was found to be negatively correlated. In one instance, the proportion

of school leavers gaining no graded O-level or CSE results, non-teaching expenditure was found to have a positive statistical association.

The only work which the Department has undertaken at the level of the individual school took account of resources in terms of pupil-teacher ratios, expenditure figures in respect of schools not being available. For only one of the examination measures did the pupil-teacher ratio appear to have a significant relationship. In this case, a small positive relationship with examination results was observed.

Civil Engineering

59. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with the level of provision in higher education for the teaching of civil engineering.

Mr. Walden: Yes. The Government have no evidence that the current provision of places for civil engineering in higher education is inadequate to meet demand.

Advanced Further Education

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total of all individual local authority bids for capital expenditure on public sector advanced further education, broken down into committed and planned expenditure, and within these two categories, into major and minor works, purchase of items costing over £100,000, other teaching and research equipment, divided into computer systems and other expenditure, furniture/plant/machine/vehicle, unrelated to new building work, land acquisition, design fees for projects starting in 1986-87 or later, and any other committed or planned expenditure, for the years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89, and the total allocations notified by his Department to the individual local education authorities, under the categories specified above for 1986-87, and the inclusive, non-binding allocations for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Walden: The information available is as follows. Tables 1, 2 and 3 show local authority bids for 1986-87, 1987-88, and 1988-89, respectively. Table 4 shows allocations for 1986-87 and table 5 provisional, non-binding indications of committed expenditure for 1987-88 and 1988-89. The form in which the bids, allocations and provisional indication were presented does not permit further breakdown beyond that shown. The breakdown of the allocations is intended to be informative rather than prescriptive. Authorities are free under the terms of part VIII of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to apply their allocations as they see fit, taking account of local needs as they perceive them.

Table 1: 1986-87 Bids

£000s cash

	Committed Major buildings	*Minor works*	*Other*	*Total Committed*	*Planned Major buildings*	*Minor works*	*Equipment over £100,000*	*Equipment under £100,000*	*Furniture plant vehicles machinery*	*Land*	*Design fees*	*Other*	*Total Planned*	*Total*
Barking	1	7	150	158	395	315	200	1,300	18	—	125	—	2,353	2,511
Barnet	27	—	920	947	—	250	1,713	450	616	—	72	—	3,101	4,048
Bromley	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	—	0	0
Ealing	14	—	15	29	233	224	250	450	—	—	25	—	1,182	1,211
Harrow	—	0	—	0	50	18	—	625	—	—	50	—	743	743
Hounslow	—	—	—	0	42	42	—	18	32	—	—	—	134	134
Kingston	998	383	25	1,406	0	1,480	810	0	—	158	—	—	2,448	3,854
Merton	20	—	—	20	—	—	—	20	—	—	—	—	20	40
ILEA	736	—	—	736	1,313	380	—	5,500	—	828	—	—	8,021	8,757
Birmingham	14	82	—	96	—	92	—	1,672	—	—	—	600	2,364	2,460
Coventry	597	140	419	1,156	173	1,547	—	3,114	769	—	—	—	5,603	6,759
Dudley	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	23	—	—	—	—	23	23
Wolverhampton	20	80	—	100	624	429	1,020	1,130	195	—	—	286	3,684	3,784
Liverpool	—	—	—	0	900	525	—	1,377	—	—	—	—	2,802	2,802
Bolton	—	—	105	—	—	—	—	200	—	—	—	—	200	200
Manchester	265	—	—	265	1,163	930	—	2,208	31	12	—	—	4,344	4,609
Salford	155	—	43	198	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	198
Doncaster	—	—	—	0	115	—	—	—	—	—	25	—	140	140
Sheffield	—	260	—	260	—	650	664	1,130	—	—	—	—	2,444	2,704
Bradford	—	—	—	0	345	20	300	50	50	—	30	—	795	795
Kirklees	20	60	35	115	—	850	200	1,650	100	—	130	—	2,930	3,045
Leeds	—	—	—	0	148	80	500	610	—	—	—	—	1,338	1,338
Wakefield	—	—	—	0	—	40	—	50	17	—	—	—	107	107
Newcastle	505	—	—	505	—	419	1,200	1,592	278	—	—	—	3,489	3,994
South Tyneside	—	—	—	0	—	38	—	124	6	—	—	—	168	168
Sunderland	746	—	—	746	—	541	665	1,541	396	—	104	—	3,247	3,993
Avon	1,486	46	—	1,532	484	183	—	1,253	—	—	344	—	2,264	3,796
Bedfordshire	—	81	—	81	—	30	—	101	—	—	—	—	131	212
Berkshire	—	—	—	0	15	180	—	280	—	—	20	—	495	495
Buckinghamshire	775	4	—	779	191	33	—	45	6	—	—	48	325	1,104
Cheshire	—	10	—	10	—	—	—	156	14	—	—	—	170	180
Cleveland	518	7	—	525	—	300	—	2,490	—	—	30	—	2,820	3,345
Cornwall	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	220	—	—	—	—	220	220
Cumbria	—	15	—	15	—	60	—	15	—	—	25	—	120	135
Derbyshire	—	60	—	60	—	200	—	650	—	—	—	—	850	910
Devon	54	7	—	61	398	326	—	1,089	—	—	—	10	1,823	1,884
Dorset	9	—	—	9	180	—	986	—	—	—	251	—	1,417	1,426
East Sussex	—	—	500	500	—	260	260	650	10	—	100	410	1,690	2,190

	Committed Major buildings	Committed Minor works	Committed Other	Total Committed	Planned Major buildings	Minor works	Equipment over £100,000	Equipment under £100,000	Furniture plant vehicles machinery	Land	Design fees	Other	Total Planned	Total
Essex	231	18	—	249	204	196	—	73	6	—	—	—	479	728
Gloucestershire	310	—	9	319	60	—	—	75	—	—	—	—	135	454
Hampshire	1,762	—	—	1,762	341	—	1,500	5,850	60	—	112	—	7,863	9,625
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	—	0	—	15	—	7	—	—	—	—	22	22
Hertfordshire	13	20	—	33	1,165	173	690	1,512	—	—	—	—	3,540	3,573
Humberside	427	20	—	447	57	68	600	200	—	—	—	—	925	1,372
Kent	—	—	0	0	—	—	—	111	—	—	—	—	111	111
Lancashire	14	46	16	76	—	460	750	1,983	20	155	150	90	3,608	3,684
Leicestershire	1,205	—	—	1,205	—	170	—	655	66	—	29	—	920	2,125
North Yorkshire	—	80	—	80	—	115	—	—	—	—	—	—	115	195
Northamptonshire	21	118	—	139	—	—	—	50	50	—	10	600	710	849
Nottinghamshire	530	8	—	538	—	59	149	500	—	—	20	—	728	1,266
Oxfordshire	2,655	—	—	2,655	1,322	178	—	2,030	45	—	89	860	4,524	7,179
Staffordshire	—	30	—	30	—	1,000	—	3,000	—	—	—	—	4,000	4,030
Surrey	—	52	—	52	—	99	—	255	—	—	—	—	354	406
Totals	13,168	1,634	2,237	17,894	9,918	12,995	12,457	48,084	2,787	1,153	1,741	2,904	92,039	109,933

Table 2: 1987-88 Bids

£000s cash

	Committed Major buildings	Minor works	Total Committed Other	Planned Major buildings	Minor works	Equipment over £100,000	Equipment under £100,000	Furniture plant vehicles machinery	Land	Design fees	Total Other	Planned	Total
Barking	—	1	—	1	948	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	956	957
Barnet	—	—	—	0	—	—	3,233	260	—	—	36	—	3,529	3,529
Bromley	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	68	—	68	68
Ealing	—	—	—	0	929	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	929	929
Harrow	—	—	—	0	250	—	—	3,045	—	—	—	—	3,295	3,295
Hounslow	—	—	—	0	45	—	—	20	34	—	—	—	99	99
Kingston	780	66	—	846	—	535	—	90	—	—	—	—	625	1,471
Merton	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
ILEA	125	—	—	125	1,197	185	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,382	1,507
Birmingham	4	—	—	4	—	8	—	323	—	—	80	1400	1,811	1,815
Coventry	257	21	24	302	595	179	—	—	315	—	—	—	1,089	1,391
Dudley	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Wolverhampton	—	—	70	70	843	639	1,110	1,220	160	—	—	474	4,446	4,516
Liverpool	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Bolton	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	210	—	—	—	—	210	210
Manchester	—	—	—	0	1,075	455	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,530	1,530
Salford	15	—	—	15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	15
Doncaster	—	—	—	0	26	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	26	26
Sheffield	—	—	—	0	—	520	700	—	—	—	—	—	1,220	1,220
Bradford	—	—	—	0	758	—	—	—	—	—	50	—	808	808
Kirklees	—	—	—	0	—	120	—	—	—	—	—	—	120	120
Leeds	—	—	—	0	17	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	37	37
Wakefield	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Newcastle	100	—	—	100	—	—	800	—	—	—	—	—	800	900
South Tyneside	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Sunderland	104	—	—	104	—	—	470	877	180	—	—	—	1,527	1,631
Avon	412	5	—	417	2,208	24	—	—	—	—	293	30	2,555	2,972
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	0	—	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	11	11
Berkshire	—	—	—	0	144	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	144	144
Buckinghamshire	740	—	—	740	381	22	—	—	—	—	—	32	435	1,175
Cheshire	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Cleveland	122	—	—	122	—	60	—	—	—	—	—	—	60	182
Cornwall	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Cumbria	—	—	—	0	—	15	—	—	—	—	—	—	15	15
Derbyshire	—	—	—	0	—	50	—	—	—	—	—	—	50	50
Devon	1	—	—	1	13	68	—	—	—	—	—	—	81	82
Dorset	343	—	—	343	798	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	798	1,141
East Sussex	—	—	350	350	—	—	110	—	—	—	—	170	280	630
Essex	230	—	—	230	222	15	—	—	—	—	—	—	237	467
Gloucestershire	20	—	—	20	625	—	—	13	—	—	—	—	638	658
Hampshire	999	—	—	999	1,007	—	300	1,740	30	—	127	—	3,204	4,203
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	—	0	1,200	—	336	1,250	—	—	—	400	3,186	3,186
Humberside	96	—	—	96	456	28	—	100	—	—	—	—	584	680
Kent	—	—	157	157	—	—	—	158	—	—	—	—	158	315
Lancashire	—	—	—	0	—	150	750	1,599	—	—	—	—	2,499	2,499
Leicestershire	—	—	750	750	—	70	—	—	—	—	—	—	70	820
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	550	550	550
Nottinghamshire	34	2	—	36	—	6	739	—	—	—	—	—	745	781
Oxfordshire	610	—	—	610	682	—	—	2,314	47	—	95	628	3,766	4,376
Staffordshire	—	30	—	30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	30

	Committed Major buildings	Committed Minor works	Total Committed Other		Planned Major buildings	Minor works	Equipment over £100,000	Equipment under £100,000	Furniture plant vehicles machinery	Land	Design fees	Total Other	Planned	Total
Surrey	—	3	—	3	—	21			—	—	—	—	21	24
Totals	4,992	128	1,351	6,471	14,419	3,209	8,548	13,219	766	0	749	3,684	44,594	51,065

Table 3: 1988-89 Bids

£000s cash

	Committed Major buildings	Minor works	Other	Total Committed	Planned Major buildings	Minor works	Equipment over £100,000	Equipment under £100,000	Furniture plant vehicles machinery	Land	Design fees	Other	Total Planned	Total
Barking	—	—	—	0	84	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	92	92
Barnet	—	—	—	0	—	—	2,904	270	—	—	12	—	3,186	3,186
Bromley	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Ealing	—	—	—	0	360	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	360	360
Harrow	—	—	—	0	500	—	—	40	—	—	—	—	540	540
Hounslow	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	22	36	—	—	—	58	58
Kingston	32	—	—	32	—	25	—	—	—	—	—	—	25	57
Merton	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
ILEA	—	—	—	0	488	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	488	488
Birmingham	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	1,037	—	—	—	770	1,807	1,807
Coventry	—	—	—	0	123	74	—	—	—	—	—	—	197	197
Dudley	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Wolverhampton	—	—	70	70	364	379	250	1,300	210	—	—	290	2,793	2,863
Liverpool	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Bolton	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	220	—	—	—	—	220	220
Manchester	—	—	—	0	790	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	790	790
Salford	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Doncaster	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Sheffield	—	—	—	0	—	540	440	—	—	—	—	—	980	980
Bradford	—	—	—	0	1,336	—	—	—	—	—	100	—	1,436	1,436
Kirklees	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Leeds	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Wakefield	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Newcastle	—	—	—	0	—	—	800	—	—	—	—	—	800	800
South Tyneside	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Sunderland	—	—	—	0	—	—	250	1,384	—	—	—	—	1,634	1,634
Avon	5	—	—	5	2,062	5	—	—	—	—	81	—	2,148	2,153
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Berkshire	—	—	—	0	210	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	210	210
Buckinghamshire	—	—	—	0	1,074	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,074	1,074
Cheshire	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Cleveland	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Cornwall	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Cumbria	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Derbyshire	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Devon	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Dorset	—	—	—	0	284	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	284	284
East Sussex	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Essex	11	—	—	11	73	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	73	84
Gloucestershire	7	—	—	7	408	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	408	415
Hampshire	54	—	—	54	269	—	500	1,750	30	—	—	—	2,549	2,603
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	0	—	—	610	490	—	—	—	100	1,200	1,200
Humberside	18	—	—	18	271	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	271	289
Kent	—	—	204	204	—	—	—	204	—	—	—	—	204	408
Lancashire	—	—	—	0	—	10	500	1,000	—	—	—	—	1,510	1,510
Leicestershire	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	40	40	40
Nottinghamshire	20	—	—	20	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	22
Oxfordshire	85	—	—	85	69	—	—	2,428	50	—	112	659	3,318	3,403
Staffordshire	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Surrey	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0
Totals	232	0	274	506	8,765	1,043	6,254	10,145	326	0	305	1,859	28,697	29,203

Table 4: Local authority capital: Allocations for advanced further education 1986-87 *£000 cash*

	Major building projects Committed	New starts	Minor works	Design fees	Equipment, furniture machinery, vehicles	Total
Barking	—	—	65	45	523	633
Barnet	—	—	78	72	950	1,100
Ealing	—	189	30	—	246	465

	Major building projects				Equipment, furniture	
	Committed	New starts	Minor works	Design fees	machinery, vehicles	Total
Harrow	—	—	12	—	157	169
Hounslow	—	—	22	—	50	72
Kingston-upon-Thames	618	—	67	150	415	1,250
Merton	—	—	—	—	20	20
Inner London	1,023	42	368	—	2,432	3,865
Birmingham	4	—	81	—	617	702
Coventry	540	—	80	—	1,065	1,685
Sandwell	—	—	—	—	23	23
Wolverhampton	—	51	62	—	657	770
Liverpool	—	314	103	—	652	1,069
Bolton	—	—	—	—	128	128
Manchester	183	100	143	—	963	1,389
Salford	—	4	—	—	—	4
Doncaster	—	115	—	—	—	115
Sheffield	—	—	111	—	752	863
Bradford	—	—	18	—	144	162
Kirklees	—	—	60	—	584	644
Leeds	—	148	84	—	529	761
Wakefield	—	—	13	—	63	76
Newcastle upon Tyne	505	—	90	—	893	1,488
South Tyneside	—	—	9	—	56	65
Sunderland	118	—	53	104	662	937
Avon	—	—	96	—	603	699
Bedfordshire	—	—	25	—	101	126
Berkshire	—	—	41	—	215	256
Buckinghamshire	—	—	15	—	53	68
Cheshire	—	—	10	—	164	174
Cleveland	518	—	49	—	628	1,195
Cornwall	—	—	—	—	81	81
Cumbria	—	—	12	—	15	27
Derbyshire	—	—	33	—	245	278
Devon	—	68	85	—	531	684
Dorset	—	—	—	150	291	441
East Sussex	—	—	74	—	613	687
Essex	—	—	44	—	79	123
Gloucestershire	310	—	—	—	84	394
Hampshire	—	140	—	—	1,809	1,949
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	15	—	7	22
Hertfordshire	10	163	75	—	682	930
Humberside	—	57	39	—	297	393
Kent	—	—	—	—	111	111
Lancashire	14	—	95	102	872	1,083
Leicestershire	35	—	92	29	623	779
North Yorkshire	—	—	11	—	—	11
Northamptonshire	—	—	21	—	189	210
Nottinghamshire	443	—	67	—	505	1,015
Oxfordshire	116	—	55	22	580	773
Staffordshire	—	—	67	—	785	852
Surrey	—	—	26	—	152	178
TOTALS	4,437	1,391	2,596	674	22,896	31,994

Table 5: Provisional indications of Committed Expenditure for 1987-88 and 1988-89

£000 cash

	1987-88	1988-89
Ealing	670	320
Kingston-upon-Thames	483	20
ILEA	332	141
Coventry	232	—
Wolverhampton	267	168
Manchester	589	331
Doncaster	26	—
Leeds	17	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	100	—
Cleveland	122	—
Devon	360	—
Gloucestershire	20	7
Hampshire	786	494
Hertfordshire	393	247
Humberside	456	271
Nottinghamshire	31	14

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science under what criteria the distribution within expenditure categories of allocations to all individual local authorities was made in respect of capital expenditure for advanced further education for 1986-87; and what criteria were used in the indicative, non-binding, allocations for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Walden: In 1986-87 the distribution of capital for advanced further education in the local authority sector was made on the following basis:

Major Buildings: Only projects which had already received provisional approval in one of the Department's AFE major building programmes received capital allocations. Such projects were funded to the level previously announced, with an enhancement of up to 50 per cent. to cover associated professional fees, furniture and equipment, and a further adjustment for inflation. In general, allocations for approved projects are spread over a four-year period, in the ratio 10:50 30:10, though it was

in practice possible to adjust the phasing of many projects in their second or subsequent year, where it was apparent from the authority's bid that the actual spending profile would differ significantly from the standard pattern. Authorities which had commenced projects outside the Department's programmes, using funds at their own disposal (eg. capital receipts, were expected to continue from that source).

Minor Works: Funds were distributed purely on the basis of student numbers, weighted using the same programme weightings as were used by the National Advisory Body for calculating recurrent funding. The total sum distributed under this heading was fixed at the level which would preserve the traditional 70:30 ratio for major:minor works.

Equipment: Half the available resources were distributed to authorities on the basis full-time equivalent student numbers, weighted using the NAB's programme weights. The balance was distributed pro rata to authorities' bids.

Land and Design Fees: Allocations were made only where essential expenditure was linked to a previously-approved major building project.

The provisional indications: Given for 1987-88 and 1988-89 relate only to major building projects which are within the Department's programmes and which were due to commence in 1986-87 or earlier. The provisional indications were calculated on the same basis as the major building project allocations for 1986-87, explained above.

Higher Education Spending

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the University Grants Committee about the implications for universities of reductions in higher education spending.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has received no recent representations from the University Grants Committee on this subject, but he expects to do so shortly.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each has been paid.

Sir Keith Joseph: The advertising agencies engaged by my Department for each of the past five years and the sums each have been paid are as follows:

Agency	*Amount* £
1981-82	
Doyle Dane Bernbach	38,612
Charles Barker	9,482
1982-83	
Doyle Dane Bernbach	1,383
Charles Barker	19,335
1983-84	
Doyle Dane Bernbach	2,794
Dorland	5,395
Charles Barker	27,494
1984-85	
Doyle Dane Bernbach	2,287
Dorland	16,024
Charles Barker	8,629
1985-86	
Doyle Dane Bernbach	3,130
Dorland	10,553
Charles Barker	17,469

Teachers (Statistics)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish available figures on the number of hours devoted to extra-curricular activities by *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time teachers in further and higher education;

(2) how many part-time teachers in further and higher education, respectively, began employment in each of the last five years.

Mr. Walden: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what pension schemes are available to part-time teachers in further and higher education; and on what criteria they are based.

Mr. Chris Patten: part-time teachers are not compulsorily subject to the teachers' superannuation scheme and are in consequence free to make their own personal pension arrangements. Part-time teachers in further and higher education (excluding universities) may elect to participate in teachers' superannuation if they are paid salary expressed as a proportion of the appropriate full-time rate. Alternatively, they may participate in the state earnings-related pension scheme if their earnings exceed the lower earnings limit.

I am sending the hon. Member general information about teachers' superannuation.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, by region, in England and Wales, the number of *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time teachers in further and higher education (i) employed and (ii) made redundant in each of the last five years.

Mr. Walden: The readily available information is as follows:

Region/Year	*Part-time employed**	*Full-time employed†*	*Full-time made redundant‡*
North			
1981	3,427	13,091	46
1982	3,586	13,166	94
1983	3,686	13,381	56
1984	3,735	13,421	58
1985	3,583	13,244	155
North-West			
1981	2,700	11,586	120
1982	2,652	11,550	189
1983	2,539	11,585	86
1984	2,893	11,611	55
1985	2,776	11,618	93
Greater London			
1981	6,426	14,715	35
1982	6,300	14,559	101
1983	5,785	14,561	45
1984	5,314	14,610	46
1985	5,179	14,330	161

Region/Year	Part-time employed*	Full-time employed†	Full-time made redundant‡
South-West			
1981	1,562	6,341	2
1982	1,553	6,397	15
1983	1,738	6,734	44
1984	1,645	6,692	63
1985	1,748	6,770	63
Rest of England			
1981	7,035	30,875	63
1982	8,000	30,913	98
1983	8,191	31,393	277
1984	8,737	31,469	266
1985	8,628	31,654	216
Wales			
1981	733	3,969	22
1982	829	4,023	32
1983	738	4,237	15
1984	717	4,268	7
1985	625	4,219	18

* Part-time teachers are expressed as full-time equivalents. They are for the maintained sector only as at January of each year. The definition of a teacher in further education changed after 1983 so direct comparisons cannot be made for part-time staff.

† As at 31 March each year. Figures for 1985 are provisional only.

‡ Numbers of part-time teachers made redundant are not available. The figures shown include a small element for some university staff not shown in full-time employment.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the average pay rise enjoyed by *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time teachers in further and higher education, respectively, in each of the last five years.

Sir Keith Joseph: The pay rates of part-time teachers are derived from those of full-time teachers and have increased by similar amounts except where states. Full-time teachers received the following pay increases*:

Date of settlement	Percentage increase
1 April 1981	†7·5
1 April 1982	5·8
1 April 1983	‡4·95
1 April 1984	‖5·05
1 April 1985 / 1 December 1985	¶5·82

Notes:

* It has been assumed that the question refers to teachers in further and higher education in the public sector. University lecturers' pay is not included.

† Part-time rates included delayed Clegg-related increases and are not therefore comparable.

‡ 4·5 per cent. plus £51 on each salary point.

‖ 4·6 per cent. plus £330 on maximum of lecturer grade I.

¶ 5 per cent. from 1 April, 2 per cent. from 1 December on 31 March 1985 rates, and transfer of those on maximum of lecturer grade I scale to lecturer grade II scale from 1 September 1985.

A-level Examinations

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the standards achieved in mathematics and physics A-level examinations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend has received no recent representations on this issue.

University College, Cardiff

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library the report which his Department has recently commissioned from the accountants Price Waterhouse about the financial situation of University College, Cardiff.

Mr. Walden: No. The report is confidential to the college, the University Grants Committee and the Government.

Donna de Groot and Stuart Ford

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, pursuant to his answer of 27 March, *Official Report*, columns *560-1*, on the expected response from Bedfordshire local education authority on the further education of Donna de Groot and Stuart Ford, he has received any further information.

Mr. Chris Patten: A response to the Department's inquiries about further education provision for these two young people was received from Bedfordshire local education authority on 4 April. Cases of this kind raise difficult issues on which specialist guidance has to be sought before a conclusion can be reached, but the Department will complete its examination of the information provided as quickly as possible.

School Meals Census

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library the school meals census for October 1985.

Mr. Dunn: In view of the disruption to the school meals service at that time, a detailed annual census was not carried out in October 1985. The responses of LEAs to a limited survey carried out in February and March 1986 on prices and policies only are currently being processed, and the results will be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

High Energy Physics

Sir John Osborn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress being made by the Governments of the member countries of CERN to review expenditure on high energy physics following the meeting which he attended of CERN's council.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 April 1986, c. *47*.]: After the meeting of the CERN committee of council on 25 April, Professor Kummer, the president of council, announced that Professor A. Abragam would chair the review of the organisation, and issued the following statement.

"Professor, W. Kummer, President of CERN Council, is appointing on behalf of Council and after consultation with its Committee, which met on 25 April — seven European personalities to be members of the high — level group established by CERN Council last February for conducting an in-depth, comprehensive review of CERN. They are:

Professor A. Abragam (1914—France)
Nuclear and Solid State Physics
College de France. French Atomic Energy Commission.

Dr. M. Boyer (1939—Spain)
Economics and Physics

President of the 'Banco Exterior De Espana'

Dr. C. De Benedetti (1934—Italy)
Electrotechnical Engineer:
Managing Director of Olivetti.

Professor B. F. F. Fender (1934—UK)
Physical Chemistry:
Vice Chancellor of the University of Keele.

Professor W. Paul (1913—FRG)
Experimental Physics Bonn University

Mr. Haakon Sandvold (1921—Norway)
Engineer: Director of Ardal of Sunndal Verk A/S.

Professor J. Vodoz (1932—Switzerland)
Technical Sciences: President Amysa SA (Yverdon)
The Group is expected to start its work before this summer and to report to the CERN Council by June 1987."
This in-depth review was established following a UK initiative at a specially convened meeting of the CERN council in February and was reported to the House on 21 February at columns 355 and 356.

ENVIRONMENT

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which of the four sets of weightings for cost and radiological parameters as given in section 5.3 of the report on the "Assessment of the Best Practicable Environmental Options for Management of Low- and Intermediate-Level Solid Radioactive Waste" he proposes to recommend to the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive.

Mr. Waldegrave: The results of the assessment are being taken into account in developing the Government's policy for radioactive waste management. It is, however, neither necessary nor advisable to recommend to UK NIREX Ltd. any one set of precise weightings on costs and parameters. The weightings are illustrative, and the assessment addresses other factors that also need to be taken account of. The assessment shows that, whichever of its four sets of weightings is used, near-surface disposal of low level waste is radiologically and economically attractive.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportions of the total volume of the United Kingdom's intermediate- and low-level radioactive waste arise solely from the Magnox reactors and the reprocessing of their spent fuel; and what these proportions will be in 1990 and 2000.

Mr. Waldegrave: The proportions of low- and intermediate-level radioactive wastes arising from Magnox reactors and the reprocessing of their spent fuel will be as follows:

	Proportion of total volume	
	By 1990 per cent.	*By 2000 per cent.*
Low-level waste arisings from 1986		
Magnox reactors	8	8
Magnox fuel reprocessing and other activities at Sellafield	72	69
Intermediate-level waste stocks		
Magnox reactors	21	18
Magnox fuel reprocessing and other activities at Sellafield	64	60

These figures are taken from the 1985 assessment of waste stocks and future arisings commissioned jointly by the Department of the Environment and NIREX. They do not take account of the potential for compaction of LLW.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby of 21 April, how much intermediate waste is produced per annum; where it is stored; and when present storage facilities will be exhausted at current rates of production.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what safeguards will operate to ensure that no high level nuclear waste is dumped at a site chosen for low level and intermediate nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: High-level nuclear waste is very easily distinguished and there is no possibility that it could be confused with low-level waste. It is intended that future authorisations to dispose of waste will require that containers are subject to planned and systematic quality assurance procedures which might involve both non-destructive and destructive tests. These methods are currently the subject of a research programme.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether detailed studies have been conducted regarding the effects of an earthquake on nuclear waste burial sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Seismic factors will be considered in the Department's assessment of all proposed nuclear waste disposal sites and the design to any associated structures.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies are being commissioned by his Department about the possible effects of radionuclides on the River Humber.

Mr. Waldegrave: Certain industrial premises on the Humber estuary are authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to discharge very low concentrations of radionuclides arising from the presence of natural radioactivity in the feed stock materials. These concentrations are so low that it is considered that there could be no significant environmental effects and therefore no specific studies of the River Humber have been undertaken.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has held any discussions with the National Farmers Union regarding the four nuclear waste disposal sites currently under investigation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have held no such discussions. If the National Farmers Union has views to offer, I shall be pleased to give them careful consideration.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the arrangements

for ensuring that radioactive waste resulting from the reprocessing of imported spent oxide fuel is returned to the country of origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Satisfactory arrangements to return the wastes arising from the reprocessing of overseas contracts will be made. Decisions on the precise form and timing will be taken in the light of further studies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether a local authority may refuse to allow a deposit of nuclear waste in its area under the regulations currently in force relating to hazardous waste substances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. Disposal of nuclear waste is authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 and as such it is not subject to the Control of Pollution Act 1974 which covers other waste substances. Under section 9(5) of the 1960 Act there is a duty on a waste disposal authority to accept radioactive waste on a disposal site specified in an authorisation for disposal of that waste granted by the relevant Minister.

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the proposed capacity to store radioactive nuclear waste, in cubic metres, at each of the four sites, Bradwell, Elstow, Fulbeck and South Killingholme.

Mrs. Rumbold: The capacity will depend on the site and design of facility eventually chosen, and on the degree of compaction of wastes. In general terms it is currently intended that the site should accommodate arisings of waste over the next 40 to 50 years. Estimates of waste arisings over this period are given in the recent assessment of best practicable environmental options for management of radioactive wastes, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Any of the four sites announced by NIREX, operated in conjunction with disposals at Drigg, would have more than adequate capacity.

Radiation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what levels and types of radiation are classified by his Department as safe; and what are the criteria upon which those levels are based.

Mr. Waldegrave: The criteria are set out in detail in "Principles for the Protection of the Human Environment" Her Majesty's Stationery Office December 1984. Section 3.8 states that

"the authorising Departments will be guided by the following objective: The risk to any member of the public in any one year from exposure to radiation from all sources other than background and medical exposure, should not be greater than that associated with a dose of 1mSv".

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, following the Chernobyl incident, he intends issuing instructions for monitoring of radiation levels to take place at locations other than those routinely in use.

Mrs. Rumbold: The present network of observation stations is very sensitive and capable of detecting small changes in the ambient level of radiation. Increasing the number of stations would add little to the amount of information gathered because radioactive particles and gases, brought to the United Kingdom by weather systems would almost certainly be dispersed over a wide area.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those locations in the United Kingdom where ambient levels of radiation are routinely monitored.

Mrs. Rumbold: Stations for the monitoring of airborne dust and rainwater are maintained by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Research Establishment and the National Radiation Protection Board at Lerwick (Shetland) Glasgow, Eskdalemuir (Dumfries), Milford Haven (Dyfed), Chilton (Oxon) and in London. There are three additional stations for the measurement of radioactivity in rainwater. Instruments to monitor radiation levels are also installed at the neclear power stations of the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will compare normal background radiation levels with those levels of radiation recorded on Wednesday 30 April at Dounreay, Darlington, Didcot and Dulwich;

(2) if he will compare the normal levels of background radiation with those levels of radiation recorded on Thursday 1 May at Dounreay, Darlington, Didcot and Dulwich.

Mrs. Rumbold: I can confirm that the levels of radiation recorded on Wednesday 30 April and Thursday 1 May 1986 at all the monitoring stations maintained in the United Kingdom by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and the National Radiological Protection Board were no different from the normal background radiation levels. There is no reason to believe that readings taken at the places mentioned by the hon. Member would differ significantly from measurements taken at the monitoring stations.

Derelict Land

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to the answer of 30 January, *Official Report*, column *609*, how much of the £17 million which he stated was available for land reclamation for Consett and Corby steelworks, the reclamation of coal tips, limestone subsidence in the Black Country the reclaiming of sites for the Stoke and Gateshead garden festivals and good quality groundwork schemes in urban areas will be spent under each heading; and how much land will be reclaimed by this expenditure.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has now been able to increase the overall derelict land grant resources available in 1986-87 for these reclamation projects to over £20 million from the provisional sum of £17 million announced on 30 January. The funds earmarked for each project are now as follows:

	£ million
Former BSC steelworks at Consett	1·5
Former BSC steelworks at Corby	3·0
Coal Tip reclamation	6·0
Limestone Subsidence in the Black Country	5·0
Stoke National garden Festival	0·38
Gateshead National Garden Festival	2·3
Groundwork	1·9

The projects listed will reclaim over 1,600 hectares of derelict land over a number of years.

Property Services Agency

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff the Property Services Agency intend moving out of block D, Brooklands avenue, Cambridge, in order to accommodate staff from the area office in Newmarket; where these staff are going to be relocated; how much accommodation they will occupy; and how much this will cost.

Sir George Young: As I have already explained to my hon. Friend, we are still developing the reorganisation proposals for PSA eastern region and I shall write to him again when further costings, accommodation issues and other information are available.

Asbestos

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial assistance is available from his Department to assist owner-occupiers towards the cost of removal of asbestos from domestic properties.

Sir George Young: Assistance may be available under the home improvement grant system where the removal of asbestos forms part of a larger scheme of improvement and repair work which is eligible for grant.

Communal Heating Systems

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, further to the hon. Member for Westminster, North's questions of 25 November 1985, *Official Report*, column *380* and 3 March 1986, *Official Report*, columns *32-3*, he will report on the progress of his consultations with the local authorities and other interested bodies on the supply of heat to tenants from a communal system; and when he proposes to introduce regulations giving secure tenants who are supplied heat from a communal system a right to information about the cost of their heating.

Mr. John Patten: I refer to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend on 3 March 1986 at column 32. Preparation of the consultation letter is nearly completed and it will be issued very soon.

Housing (Coventry)

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the amount of private sector accommodation available for rental in Coventry in each year since 1980.

Sir George Young: The available information is about accommodation occupied by households who were present on census night in 1981; it is contained in table 20 of the "Census 1981 County report for West Midlands, Part 1," a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money is expected to be made available to Coventry city council under section 12 of the Housing Defects Act 1984 in *(a)* the current and *(b)* the next financial year.

Sir George Young: Coventry city council has not designated any properties under section 12 of the Housing Defects act. The council will receive Exchequer contributions towards grants or repurchases made in respect of properties designated nationally under section 1 of the Act (now section 528 of the Housing Act 1985), on the basis set out in that legislation.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each has been paid.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Since 1981-82 my Department has engaged the following agencies and has paid the sums as listed.

	£
1981-82	
Doyle Dane Bernbach	582,155
1982-83	
J. Walter Thompson	433,361
Doyle Dane Bernbach	250,952
1983-84	
Doyle Dane Bernbach	14,888
1984-85	
Doyle Dane Bernbach	12,873
J. Walter Thompson	481,219
Dorland	260,409
1985-86	
Doyle Dane Bernbach	287,843
Posterlink Selection Limited	30,639

In addition, over the same period, my Department has used the services of Charles Barker Advertising for the placing of statutory notices and advertising on behalf of the Property Services Agency, at a total cost of £500,000.

Land Sale, Gosport

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the matter of the proposed tender sale of the site adjacent to the Wildgrounds, Gosport by the Property Services Agency, he will make it his policy that no sale shall take place unless the borough of Gosport shall have had the right to equal the best tender of any other prospective purchaser.

Sir George Young: The land will be offered for sale by public auction. The borough council will thus be able to assess the competition and bid accordingly.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now publish the results of the efficiency scrutiny carried out by his Department into the planning appeals system, including the action plan setting out the objectives for reducing median times for handling appeals.

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer this question shortly.

Owner-Occupiers

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of owner-occupiers for each year since 1979; and if he will estimate for each of these years what proportion these figures represent of the total number of households.

Sir George Young: It is estimated that about 12 million dwellings in England were owner-occupied at the end of December 1985; this was 64 per cent. of the total of 18·7 million dwellings. Figures for earlier years appear in table 9.3 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1974-1984" a copy of which is in the Library.

Rates

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the percentage rate rise, at ratepayer level, between *(a)* 1981-82 and 1986-87, *(b)* 1982-83 and 1986-87 and *(c)* 1985-86 and 1986-87 in (i) each London borough and the City of London, (ii) each metropolitan district and (iii) each non-metropolitan district.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today placed the available information in the Library.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment for each non-metropolitan county council what was *(a)* its rate precept in 1985-86, *(b)* its rate precept in 1986-87, *(c)* the percentage increase in rate precept in 1986-87, *(d)* its current expenditure in 1985-86, *(e)* its current current-expenditure in 1986-87 and *(f)* the percentage increase in current expenditure in 1986-87.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is as follows:

Shire counties' precepts and net current expenditure in 1985-86 and 1986-87

	1985-86 Precept (p)	*1986-87 Precept (p)*	*Percentage increase in precept*	*Current expenditure* 1985-86 (£ million)*	*1986-87 (£ million)*	*Percentage increase in current expenditure*
Avon	190·60	224·70	17·9	355·166	385·707	8·6
Bedfordshire	161·10	191·40	18·8	199·842	211·265	5·7
Berkshire	150·80	170·20	12·9	258·891	266·330	2·9
Buckinghamshire	147·50	191·80	30·0	224·157	246·017	9·8
Cambridgeshire	146·00	194·00	32·9	217·434	239·842	10·3
Cheshire	178·00	193·45	8·7	370·437	409·043	10·4
Cleveland	210·00	235·00	11·9	255·629	277·893	8·7
Cornwall	143·50	169·80	18·3	153·468	165·630	7·9
Cumbria	176·00	240·00	36·4	190·930	206·875	8·4
Derbyshire	185·00	233·00	25·9	361·866	397·136	9·7
Devon	146·75	175·75	19·8	338·423	368·015	8·7
Dorset	149·00	172·00	15·4	201·167	220·268	9·5
Durham	168·00	197·00	17·3	234·707	251·406	7·1
East Sussex	147·30	176·60	19·9	212·384	230·214	8·4
Essex	151·50	180·00	18·8	529·803	576·274	8·8
Gloucestershire	152·40	180·02	18·1	176·086	195·520	11·0
Hampshire	147·50	169·00	14·6	507·285	551·872	8·8
Hereford and Worcester	146·50	162·50	10·9	227·099	242·643	6·8
Hertfordshire	157·70	192·30	21·9	342·569	380·205	11·0
Humberside	171·00	196·00	14·6	356·808	384·084	7·6
Isle of Wight	157·00	188·39	20·0	42·977	47·148	9·7
Kent	144·59	162·97	12·7	503·690	539·279	7·1
Lancashire	158·50	184·00	16·1	544·793	595·651	9·3
Leicestershire	149·50	189·80	27·0	338·917	360·123	6·3
Lincolnshire	143·50	175·00	22·0	200·967	214·551	6·8
Norfolk	143·00	170·20	19·0	234·956	255·815	8·9
Northamptonshire	153·00	172·10	12·5	205·062	226·518	10·5
Northumberland†	175·00	212·96	21·7	—	115·589	—
North Yorkshire	151·00	175·00	15·9	252·833	271·531	7·4
Nottinghamshire	186·00	219·00	17·7	407·855	422·161	3·5
Oxfordshire	151·00	188·50	24·8	181·738	196·003	7·8
Shropshire	143·00	171·00	19·6	142·366	156·779	10·1
Somerset	147·00	186·00	26·5	156·791	176·249	12·4
Staffordshire	169·00	185·50	9·8	371·843	388·253	4·4
Suffolk	150·00	176·50	17·7	206·165	224·898	9·1
Surrey	152·50	170·80	12·0	330·123	348·988	5·7
Warwickshire	151·60	181·70	19·9	175·186	189·114	8·0
West Sussex	141·00	168·00	19·1	215·202	234·034	8·8
Wiltshire	147·00	185·00	25·9	189·659	208·970	10·2

* Current expenditure figures are taken from counties' budget returns. The 1985-86 figures are revised estimates.

† The 1986-87 precept for Northumberland includes the Northumbria police authority precept. Due to abolition, Northumberland's 1985-86 current expenditure figure is not comparable with 1986-87.

Expenditure

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his latest estimate for local authorities in England, taken together, for *(a)* total budgeted expenditure for 1985-86, *(b)* the Government's planned expenditure for these authorities for 1986-87 and *(c)* total budgeted expenditure for 1986-87 showing in each case (i) total expenditure for block grant purposes and (ii) current expenditure.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information available is as follows:

£ million

	"Total" Expenditure	Current Expenditure
1985-86 Budget*	21,995	22,392
1986-87 Plans†	22,790	22,253·3
1986-87 Budget	n/a	n/a

* Latest published information.
† As given in the "Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1986-87".
n/a = Not available.

Local authority budget returns for 1986-87 are currently being processed by my Department, but a number of authorities' returns are still outstanding. Aggregate figures are therefore not available.

Anglian Water Authority

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *239*, what are the problems about which he is in correspondence with the Anglian water authority on the subject of the Middle Level Transfer Order 1985; how soon he expects to resolve them; and if he will make a statement on the position of those farmers who contributed to the capital cost of providing the irrigation water they now are using under the terms of this order, pending its confirmation or extension.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer this question shortly.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses have been sold to sitting tenants by local authorities in each of the last 10 years; what was the average receipt to the authorities for each house sold; what was the average cost of *(a)* building new houses *(b)* rehabilitating old houses for local authorities in each year, and how many new houses and rehabilitated houses respectively he estimates local authorities could have built with the moneys available to them from the receipts of council house sales.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 April 1986, c. *413*]: The available information is given in the table. There are other forms of housing expenditure that local authorities undertake, in addition to those mentioned. Therefore, my Department has not made the estimates requested.

Local Authorities: England
(a) *Sales of dwellings and costs of new building Sales**

	Dwellings	Initial receipts £ million	Average initial receipt £	†Average construction cost £
1976	5,700	10·5	1,800	‡7,200
1977	12,500	29·5	2,400	8,100
1978	29,000	77·8	2,700	9,100
1979	40,500	103·2	2,500	10,600
1980	79,600	203·9	2,600	12,800
1981	94,200	375·1	4,000	13,400
1982	186,700	914·8	4,900	14,500
1983	132,600	975·7	7,400	15,300
1984	97,800	806·8	8,200	16,400
1985‖	87,800	859·9	9,800	16,900

* All sales including sales of vacant dwellings. Initial receipts for 1976 to 1978 have been estimated from financial year data.
† Cost, at tender stage, of substructure and superstructure construction. Average is calculated over all dwellings each year, not adjusted for mix of dwellings type. GLC figures are included from 1980 only. New town dwellings are included.
‡ Includes Wales.
‖ Provisional.

(b) *Renovations of dwellings: work completed**

	Conversion			Improvement		
	Dwellings	Cost £ million	Average cost £	Dwellings	Cost £ million	Average cost £
1975-76	2,900	22·8	7,900	33,600	99·4	3,000
1976-77	5,000	31·7	6,400	33,300	79·5	2,400
1977-78	3,900	29·6	7,700	43,200	113·0	2,600
1978-79	5,300	53·9	10,200	53,300	180·7	3,400
1979-80	4,100	47·4	11,700	80,000	333·1	4,200
1980-81	4,900	65·9	13,600	61,900	357·0	5,800
1981-82	4,300	61·1	14,200	49,200	306·9	6,200
1982-83	2,400	n.a.	n.a.	61,900	n.a.	n.a.
1983-84	2,300	28·1	12,200	82,200	373·6	4,500
1984-85	1,800	27·6	15,100	92,700	385·3	4,200

* Work approved up to December 1977. Work completed from January 1978.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Jasmine Beckford (Report)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now give Her Majesty's Government's response to the report of the Committee of Inquiry into the death of Jasmine Beckford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: The report of the inquiry which was commissioned by the London borough of Brent and the Brent health authority has many recommendations for them to follow up. I am aware of the action being taken by them. But the report also made many proposals for consideration nationally by the Government and other bodies.

The Government fully support and welcome the main themes of the report. This means that those concerned with the care of children at risk of being abused must always put the interests of the child first. Where a child is in the care of a local authority they have a clear legal obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child and in any conflict of interests between parents and child, those of the child must always come first.

These principles will be reiterated in a revised guide to authorities about the arrangements to be followed for the protection of children. We have placed great emphasis on ensuring that all staff are fully aware of the legal framework in this area and how it affects the responsibilities which they bear. It takes up a number or recommendations and concerns in the Beckford inquiry report, concentrating in particular on improving collaboration between health and local authorities. These and other bodies will be consulted about the content of the guidance. A copy of the draft guidance which aims to review and update existing advice has been placed in the Library of the House of Commons and is published today.

The Beckford report made a number of recommendations regarding the law and related court practice on child care. I announced last week that the Government intended to introduce a comprehensive Bill in child care law as soon as parliamentary time allowed. We shall be publishing a White Paper in the autumn and this will take account of

the proposals in the Beckford report. In addition, the Government are seeking, through the private Member's legislation of my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) power to make regulations governing arrangements by local authorities to allow a child in care to go home on trial. The Lord Chancellor has issued a circular to justices' clerks about procedures and training of magistrates taking account of the report's recommendations.

My Social Services Inspectorate has undertaken an urgent review of assessment by, and supervision of, social workers handling child abuse cases where a child in care has been returned home. This report and recommendations are also being published today and sent to all directors of social services by the Chief Inspector of the SSI. The Chief Inspector has stressed that the critical decision to return a child home on trial must always be taken at a senior level and in accordance with an agreed plan worked out with all the agencies concerned. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library of the House of Commons. In general, the cases studied showed evidence that local authorities give high priority to child abuse work and that cases were usually handled by qualified, experienced staff. Immediate action to protect children following reports of abuse was generally satisfactory. However, the report identifies room for improvements in planning and monitoring of arrangements for their longer term protection and makes recommendations. It highlights the need for a more systematic approach to the work and to the supervision of field-workers handling these difficult and demanding cases.

The messages are broadly similar to those in the Beckford report and my SSI will be following up its recommendations with authorities. We also intend to produce a practice guide for social workers in child abuse work and we will be considering nursing and health visitor practice in child abuse cases. In addition, new guidance on the action authorities should take to review their services following deaths or other serious cases of abuse, including formal inquiries where necessary, will be issued within the next few months. The training implications of the SSI report will be examined with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work.

The report also made recommendations about research and training. We have a continuing programme of research on child care matters and, as resources allow, will give high priority to further work on child abuse. The proposed extention of basic social work training to three years was already under consideration between CCETSW, other relevant bodies and the Government and a decision will be taken in due course. We are making £300,000 available over the next three years towards developing training and educational programmes, particularly aimed at the problem of sexual abuse of children. We have drawn to the attention of other national bodies those recommendations concerning their responsibilities.

We are grateful to Mr. Blom Cooper and his team for the careful thought their report has given towards better ways of achieving the common objective of us all—the protection of children from abuse. The Government's aim is to promote positive improvements in services wherever these are needed and we will continue to pursue this as a matter of urgency.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will explain the evidence which caused him to place the drug Mucodyne on the limited list for children only; and if he will make the drug available on prescription to all age groups.

Mr. Hayhoe: Carbocisteine—of which Mucodyne is one brand name version — is not available under the National Health Service for all children. It is available for prescription only to assist in the management of children with tracheostomies as recommended by the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs. The committee's advice is given to Ministers in confidence.

NHS (Housing Stock)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of National Health Service housing stock is to be retained to accommodate junior medical and dental staff, nursing and midwifery students and those training to be members of professions allied to medicine.

Mr. Hayhoe: This information will not be available until authorities' plans are all in final form.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many units of housing stock have been declared surplus to requirements under his Department's circular HC(85)19; and how many of these units are currently occupied;

(2) what are the total numbers of housing units and the percentages which are currently vacant owned by each health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: I will provide a summary of health authorities' plans when they have been approved by the Department. Information about the number currently occupied is not held centrally.

Benefits (Claimants)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of *(a)* single payments and *(b)* urgent needs payments, weekly and one-off, paid to claimants who (i) are under pensionable age and are not required to register for work, (ii) are under pensionable age required to register for work and (iii) are over pensionable age; and what is *(x)* the average rate per 1,000 claimants in (i), (ii) and (iii), *(y)* the average payment made to claimants in (i), (ii) and (iii) and *(z)* the number of claimants in (i), (ii) and (iii) with dependent children for the latest available year at Bloomsbury, Finsbury Park, Highgate, Hoxton and Stoke Newington area offices of his Department.

Mr. Major: The following table sets out the information available on *(a)* single payments and *(b)* urgent needs payments made by offices specified for the year ending April 1986 for the categories requested. Information about claimants with dependent children is not available.

(a) Single payments

Category	*Bloomsbury*	*Finsbury Park*	*Highgate*	*Hoxton*	*Stoke Newington*
Claimants under pensionable age not required to register for work					
Number of awards	969	5,206	4,291	4,084	2,266
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	558	1,120	1,003	1,136	927
Average payment	£196·22	£90·40	£105·86	£98·47	£96·67
Claimants under pensionable age required to register for work					
Number of awards	1,158	4,506	3,285	3,237	2,065
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	245	489	361	599	457
Average payment	£220·76	£85·67	£106·30	£95·67	£110·96
Claimants over pensionable age					
Number of awards	501	1,338	1,034	1,359	659
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	183	302	220	367	285
Average payment	£96·38	£50·38	£63·37	£53·84	£64·64

(b) Urgent needs payments

Category	*Bloomsbury*	*Finsbury Park*	*Highgate*	*Hoxton*	*Stoke Newington*
Claimants under pensionable age not required to register for work					
Number of awards	148	148	122	217	208
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	85	32	29	60	85
Claimants under pensionable age required to register for work					
Number of awards	1,174	396	503	381	468
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	249	43	55	70	103
Claimants over pensionable age					
Number of awards	50	11	12	0	22
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	18	2	3	0	10

Information is not available of amounts paid for urgent need.

Single and urgent need payment awards for year ending April 1986 have been set against the counts of live cases in action at 12 February 1986 for the calculation of a rate per 1,000 claimants (the latest available figures).

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the number and percentage of households and persons in Scotland below, at, or up to 40 per cent. above supplementary benefit level in 1979, 1981 and 1983.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have the information as soon as possible after the low income families tables for 1983 are placed in the Library.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the December 1984 figures for *(a)* the numbers in receipt of supplementary benefit and *(b)* the numbers dependent on supplementary benefit, and distinguishing in each case between retirement pensioners, the unemployed, the sick and disabled, one parent families, widows and others.

Mr. Major: Provisional figures for the number in receipt of supplementary benefit are given in the table. It is regretted that information about the number of dependants is not yet available.

Thousands

	Number
Pensioners	1,666
Unemployed	1,786
Sick and disabled	279
One parent families*	491
Widows	15
Others	359
Total	4,596

* Not included in other groups.
Source: Quarterly Statistical Enquiry December 1984.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in each of the years since 1979 for which figures are available (1) how many representations he has received asking him to use the discretion conferred upon him under section 20 of the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 not to recover recoverable overpayments of supplementary benefit; (2) in how many instances he used this discretion not to recover such overpayments; how many of the representations came in the first instance from: *(a)* the claimant or his or her representative or advocate, including an honourable Member, and *(b)* from his Department; in how many of the instances the initial representation was made to him by: *(a)* the claimant, *(b)* the claimant's representative or advocate and *(c)* his Department; what was the average amount, per claimant, involved in (1) above; and what was the average amount, per claimant involved in (2) above.

Mr. Major: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each have been paid.

Mr. Fowler: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Hypothermia

Mr. Neil Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many deaths have occurred in the London borough of Havering during each of the last five years which have been attributed to hypothermia as a primary or contributary cause;

(2) how many deaths have occurred in the London borough of Redbridge during each of the last five years which have been attributed to hypothermia as a primary or contributary cause;

(3) how many deaths have occurred in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham during each of the last five years which have been attributed to hypothermia as a primary or contributary cause;

(4) how many deaths have occurred in the London borough of Waltham Forest during each of the last five years which have been attributed to hypothermia as a primary or contributary cause;

(5) how many deaths have occurred in the London borough of Newham during each of the last five years which have been attributed to hypothermia as a primary or contributary cause;

(6) how many deaths have occurred in the London borough of Tower Hamlets during each of the last five years which have been attributed to hypothermia as a primary or contributary cause.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of deaths with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, irrespective of whether it did or did not appear as the underlying cause of death, to usual residents of the London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest for 1981 to 1985 are shown in the table.

Numbers of deaths with any mention of hypothermia for selected London Boroughs 1981 to 1985

Area of usual residence	*Year*				
	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	**1985*
London borough of Barking and Dagenham	2	3	2	1	3
Havering	2	2	2	—	4
Newham	2	1	—	4	3
Redbridge	3	1	3	5	1
Tower Hamlets	3	1	4	5	3
Waltham Forest	1	5	—	1	2

* Figures for 1985 are provisional.

Re-establishment Centres

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what progress he is making with the proposed transfer of re-establishment centres to the Manpower Services Commission and to other suitable agencies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to be able to reply to the Second Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1985-86, on resettlement units and re-establishment centres;

(3) when he expects to be able to announce the future of his Department's resettlement unit in Southampton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: There is no proposition to transfer re-establishment centres to the Manpower Services Commission. We are considering the extent to which the range of help available to the long-term unemployed duplicates the facilities available to re-establishment centre users. We shall then make a final decision about the future of the re-establishment centres. The community programme, for example, is to be increased to 255,000 places by November 1986. By March 1987 this improved provision should make it possible to assist all the long-term unemployed as they reach 12 months unemployment. Each person referred to a Manpower Services Commission employment adviser will have an initial interview at which the availability of jobs and the appropriateness of training will be considered. Links between employment advisers and DHSS unemployment review officers will be strengthened to match people with the most suitable Manpower Services Commission programme.

I hope to be able to reply shortly to the second report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1985-86. In so far as the resettlement unit in Southampton is concerned, no decisions have yet been made. Regionally-based teams have been asked to report on alternative provision for all DHSS resettlement units and their findings will be discussed and the issues drawn together at a national resettlement conference on 3 June. The views of the conference on the criteria against which individual proposals should be judged will be available to Ministers when they consider the regional reports.

Limb Fitting Service

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what change in structure and organisation of the limb fitting service have taken place in his Department *(a)* in the year prior to the establishment of the McColl committee, *(b)* during the working of the McColl committee and *(c)* since the publication of the McColl report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: It would have been premature to make organisational changes in the artificial limb service immediately before the working party was set up or while it was sitting. Some important improvements in the service not requiring reorganisation, such as the introduction of the new light-weight limb systems, were nevertheless made. We do not expect to make decisions on major changes before the completion of consultations which are currently in progress and initial work being carried out under the direction of the National Health Service management board. As an interim measure we have created a senior post—general manager of disablement services — to be responsible for carrying this work forward without delay and to be accountable to the board for the operation of the services of artificial limb and appliance centres.

Disabled People (Motor Cars)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the expert individuals and organisations in the field of road transport and disability whom he consulted regarding the issue of automatic gear-boxes for right leg amputees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Informal Carers

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give full details of the areas covered, the numbers of people covered and an outline of what is involved, in each project for support of informal carers, as outlined in his Department's press release 86/127 of 16 April.

Mr. Whitney: Demonstration districts of services for informal carers have recently been established in East Sussex, Stockport and Sandwell. In each area DHSS will be providing up to £600,000 to be spent over three years to initiate, extend and improve services provided by voluntary organisations. The selection and management of the projects to be supported will be the responsibility of the voluntary sector, working with the co-operation of the social services and health authorities. The Department's social services inspectorate is co-ordinating the projects and the Tavistock institute is undertaking the evaluation. It is too soon to say how many people will be directly assisted by the demonstration projects.

Residential Homes

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local authority old people's residential homes have been sold, or put up for sale, in each year between 1979 to 1986, including *(a)* the names of the homes, *(b)* the numbers of elderly residents, *(c)* the local authority concerned and *(d)* the political party in control of each authority at the relevant time.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many private residential care homes and nursing homes have had their registration cancelled as a result of providing an inadequate service during the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Information about cancelled registrations has been notified to us only since 1 January 1985. Up to 31 March 1986, six residential care homes and two nursing homes had had their registrations cancelled. Three of the former were on grounds that included the poor quality of the services or facilities.

Board and Lodging Payments

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average length of waiting time between application and receipt for board and lodging payments at his Department's Regency street, London office; and what was the national average for *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* each month of 1986.

Mr. Major: I regret that no information is available centrally on the average length of waiting time between application and receipt for board and lodging payments. Individual statistics on these cases are not kept routinely so that information could be obtained only by a special exercise which would be disproportionately expensive.

Social Fund

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish details of *(a)* training to be given to social fund officers for race awareness, *(b)* arrangements to be made for claimants whose written and spoken English is poor and *(c)* the funds to be made available for interpreters.

Mr. Newton: These aspects will be considered as the detail of the social fund is developed.

Psychiatric Patients, Lincoln

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much additional funding has been allocated to North Lincolnshire dirstrict health authority to provide community care for psychiatric patients discharged from St. John's Hospital, Lincoln.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Suicides

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many suicides there have been in the last year, and each year from 1979 to 1985, within the North Lincolnshire area; and how many of these were existing or past psychiatric patients.

Mr. Whitney: The table gives the numbers of suicides to usual residents of the north Lincolnshire health area from 1979 to 1985.

It is not known centrally how many of these were existing or past psychiatric patients.

Numbers of deaths from suicide, persons, all ages North Lincolnshire health areas 1979 to 1985

Area of usual residence	*Year*	*Number*
Lincolnshire North Health District	1979	19
	1980	18
	1981	24
North Lincolnshire District Health Authority	1982	25
	1983	21
	1984	25
	*1985	21

* figures for 1985 are provisional

Ethnic Survey

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to produce guidelines for the recording of ethnic origin with details of individual social security claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: We have no intention of producing guidelines for the recording of the ethnic origin of claimants as part of social security claims procedures. This is not information which claimants are required to furnish before their claim is determined by the adjudication officer.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will set out in a table the national insurance contributions liability at its weekly equivalent of *(a)* contracted-in employees through class 1, *(b)* contracted-out employees through class 1 and *(c)* self-employed people through class 2 contributions and class 4 contributions net of tax relief, in 1986-87, assuming their income is at the following constant levels throughout the

year (i) £38, £60, £95, £285, and £1,000 per week, (ii) £2,075 and £4,450 per year and (iii) 0·5, 1·0, and 2·0 times average female earnings and 0·5, 0·75 and 1·5 times average male earnings, respectively, and at the minimum level of income to benefit in full from the tax relief on class 4 contributions at 40 per cent., 45 per cent., 50 per cent., 55 per cent., and 60 per cent. as a single person with no other tax allowances;

(2) what would be the current level of class 2 national insurance contributions if they had not been reduced in October 1985 and if they had been increased in April 1986 in line with the usual formula; and at that level what would be the extra income to the national insurance fund or the Exchequer;

(3) what level of class 2 and class 4 contributions would be necessary to ensure that the self-employed paid the full actuarial cost of the benefits which they receive;

(4) what would be the gain to the national insurance fund or the Exchequer of removing the upper earnings limit from national insurance payments for the self-employed *(a)* with present tax relief and *(b)* without it;

(5) what would be the gain to the national insurance fund or the Exchequer of removing the upper earnings limit for class 1 national insurance contributions; and what reduction could be made in the standard rate of contribution using that gain;

(6) what would be the gain to the national insurance fund or the Exchequer of removing the reduced rates of national insurance for very low earners, in such a way that the full rate of contribution were payable down to the lower earnings limit.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Computers

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines Her Majesty's Government is issuing on inter-departmentally linked computer-held information in the light of the White Paper plans for up-dating the Department of Health and Social Security system; and who will have access to the up-dated computers in the Department of Health and Social Security and under what circumstances.

Mr. Major: There are no current plans to issue guidelines on inter-departmentally linked computer-held information in the light of the White Paper plans to update the Department's computer systems. We have firm plans to link with only one other Department — the Department of Employment. The two Departments already work closely together, using computerised systems, for the provision of social security benefits. The Department of Employment acts as agent for the DHSS in the payment of unemployment benefit and supplementary allowance for the unemployed and this Department has responsibility for the two unemployment benefit computer centres at Reading and Livingston.

The new computerisation plans involving the two Departments include the provision of terminals and visual display units in local unemployment benefit offices, providing staff there with a direct link to these two mainframe computers—previously they were linked by the overnight telegraph system. The terminals and VDUs are currently being installed, in an average of 10 new offices a week, on a rolling programme stretching into 1987. This new facility allows unemployment benefit staff to input, amend and update claims immediately, and gives them instant information to answer benefit claimants' inquiries.

This system also provides access to the DHSS general index for the purpose of tracing national insurance numbers necessary in the processing of an unemployment benefit claim. This facility will be retained when the general index is absorbed into the new departmental central index which is to be developed from 1988.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what reciprocal arrangements with Northern Ireland have been made under section 31 of the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976.

Mr. Major: None. It has not been necessary to make use of this power since problems which have arisen over co-ordination with the Northern Ireland system of supplementary benefits have been resolved by other means.

Millvale House, Croxteth

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will cause an inspection to be made of conditions and food at Millvale House, Croxteth, Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 1 May 1986 at column *468*.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department takes to seek to ensure that private nursing homes are properly inspected and are providing an adequate service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: To ensure that standards are maintained, private nursing homes must be registered by district health authorities, and inspected by them at least twice a year. The statutory requirements are set out in the Registered Homes Act 1984 and the Nursing Homes and Mental Nursing Homes Regulations 1984. In addition, the Department has issued guidance to health authorities and commended a handbook produced by the National Association of Health Authorities.

Ethnic Minorities (Psychiatric Treatment)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps the Mental Health Act Commission is taking to seek to ensure equal and appropriate psychiatric treatment for ethnic minorities.

Mr. Whitney: The Mental Health Act Commission's broad remit is to protect the interests of all detained mental patients regardless of ethnic origin. The commission's first biennial report (House of Commons Paper 586, October 1985) discusses ethnic issues and the commission's response to them.

Involuntary Mental Patients

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what measures the Mental Health Act

Commission is taking to investigate the high number of black people admitted as involuntary patients under the Mental Health Act.

Mr. Whitney: No such measures are being taken. A person may be detained under the provisions of the Mental Health Act only if he or she is seriously mentally disordered. The circumstances in which a person may be compulsorily detained and the persons with power to decide on detention are set out in the Act.

Transcultural Psychiatry

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money is currently being spent on research into the area of transcultural psychiatry; and on what projects this money is spent.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimate of the number of people in receipt of family income supplement.

Mr. Major: At February 1986, the latest date for which information is available, there were 202,000 families in receipt of family income supplement.

Organ Donors (Computer Records)

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any studies have been undertaken to determine the feasibility of keeping central or regional computer records of all who have indicated their willingness to donate their organs for transplant upon death.

Mr. Whitney: The costs and practical implications of establishing and maintaining a free standing national computer register of people in England willing to become organ donors were examined by the Department in 1980, and we recently looked at these again in the light of current computer costs. We are not convinced that at the present time the benefits would justify the large expenditure required. A scheme using a computer register was launched earlier this year which aims to cover the whole of Wales, and we have asked to be kept informed of evaluations of its effect on the supply of donor organs. Studies were also prepared prior to the setting up of local computer registers in Manchester and Glasgow.

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was *(a)* the percentage award recommended by the review body for staff nurses and ward sisters in 1985 and *(b)* the percentage each category received in the 12 months ended 1 April.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is as follows:

	Percentage increases and basic pay rates			
	(a) 1985-86 Review Body Recommendation	*(b) 1985-86 Pay Award*		
		From 1.4.85	*From 1.2.86*	*Total 1985-86*
Staff Nurse				
Min.	11.2 (£6,000)	4·8 (£5,708)	1·9 (£6,000)	6·6
Max.	9·0 (£7,175)	4·8 (£6,960)	1·5 (£7,175)	6·3
Nursing Sister II (Ward Sister)				
Min.	9·6 (£7,480)	4·8 (£7,220)	1·6 (£7,480)	6·4
Max.	14·3 (£10,000)	4·8 (£9,254)	2·4 (£10,000)	7·2

Notes:

(1) The Government accepted the recommendations of the review in full but payment was staged: the first instalment with effect from 1 April 1985 and the balance with effect from 1 February 1986.

(2) Many staff nurses and ward sisters receive additional payments for working unsocial hours and overtime. The average gross earnings in 1985-86 of a staff nurse and ward sister in Great Britain are estimated to be of the order of £7,938 and £10,175 respectively.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet received the report of the review body on nurses' pay for the award which was due on 1 April.

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has received the report of the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine. This is being considered and an announcement will be made in due course.

Potassium Iodate (Stocks)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what stocks of potassium iodide are kept for use in the event of threat from radioactive fallout; how these stocks are distributed throughout the United Kingdom; and what plans are in hand to ensure their maintenance and replenishment.

Mr. Whitney: Stocks of potassium iodate tablets are held in the vicinity of all civil nuclear installations in Great Britain. They are held either on the site, or at nearby police stations, or hospitals. Maintenance and replenishment of stocks are subject to local arrangements.

Unemployment Benefit

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the rate of unemployment benefit in April in each of the years 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the publication "Social Security Statistics 1985", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Gordon Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to extend mobility allowance to those persons who would qualify on grounds of disability but who are debarred from allowance solely because their application was made after their 65th birthday.

Mr. Newton: Claims for mobility allowance can be made by people aged up to the 66th birthday but they have to show that the medical conditions for entitlement were satisfied before they reached age 65. We have no plans to change these limits.

Medical Students

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the education of medical students in racial and cultural factors; and if any changes are proposed in this area.

Mr. Hayhoe: None. Under the Medical Act 1983 the General Medical Council is responsible for determining the knowledge and skill needed for a medical qualification.

Psychiatric Illness (Statistics)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is collected by his Department about the incidence of particular psychiatric diagnoses and the breakdown of the incidence by reference to age, sex and ethnic origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Relevant diagnostic information, but not ethnic origin, is collected through the mental health inquiry in respect of patients admitted to mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units and the special hospitals in England. For mental illness hospitals and units, summaries of the available diagnostic data by age and sex are contained in booklet No. 12 (Diagnostic data) in the series of DHSS booklets "Mental Health Statistics for England", copies of which are in the Library.

Special Health Authorities

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to abolish *(a)* all special health authorities and *(b)* the Bethlem Royal hospital and the Maudsley hospital special health authority.

Mr. Whitney: We have no such plans.

Maudsley Hospital

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the visit to the Maudsley hospital by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) planned for 13 May has been cancelled.

Mr. Whitney: My visit to Maudsley hospital was postponed from 13 May until 15 May because of the likelihood of inescapable parliamentary commitments on the earlier date.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why his officials visited the Maudsley hospital on 25 April.

Mr. Whitney: Departmental officials make regular visits to the Maudsley hospital but I am aware of no visit made by officials on 25 April.

Bethlem Royal Hospital

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what observations the Government's health advisory service has recently made about treatment of adolescents at the Bethlem royal hospital.

Mr. Whitney: I assume the hon. Lady is referring to the National Health Service health advisory service's recent report "Bridges over Troubled Waters" on services for disturbed adolescents, which was published in April. The report refers inter alia, to the services provided at the Bethlem royal hospital and I am sending the hon. Lady a copy.

Mentally Ill Children

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what facilities are available for inpatient treatment of seriously disturbed mentally ill children in south-east England.

Mr. Whitney I regret that this information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairmen of the regional health authorities for the information she seeks.

Generic Services (UK) Ltd.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether Generic Services (UK) Ltd. has a United Kingdom manufacturers' licence to manufacture medicinal dosage forms or to package by limited assembly only;

(2) if he will list the overseas sources of the manufacture of medicines in respect of which product licences have been granted to Generic Services (UK) Ltd.; and whether all these sources have been inspected by the British Medicines Inspectorate in the last 12 months.

Mr. Hayhoe: No information is available concerning Generic Services (UK) Ltd.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he has made to monitor the repair and decoration of residential accommodation which district health authorities retain, and to ensure that the guidance in HC(85)19, to the effect that staff who need to be resident should be housed in accommadation of good quality and that authorities should regard bringing the retained stock of accommodation up to a reasonable standard as a priority charge on the proceeds of sale, is followed.

Mr. Hayhoe: No specific arrangements have been made; the monitoring of district health authorities' performance is a matter for regional health authorities.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue a health circular instructing district health authorities to ensure that surplus National Health Service accommodation will, wherever possible, be offered to tenants for purchase and that where it is not possible to make the offer or where tenants are unwilling to purchase the accommodation, they will be given at least one year to make alternative arrangements even where those staff no longer qualify for accommodation.

Mr. Hayhoe: Circular HC(85)19, issued in July 1985, contains these provisions for staff who have been tenants for at least two years. It is open to authorities to sell surplus properties to staff with shorter tenancies, but not at concessionary prices.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many district health authorities have sought regional health authority and Department of Health and Social Security approval for the provision of accommodation to staff other than junior medical and dental staff, nursing and midwifery students and trainees for the professions allied to medicine.

Mr. Hayhoe: Virtually every authority has sought approval to retain some accommodation for staff other than professional trainees.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many units of accommodation comprised in National Health Services houses and self-contained flats would be sold off if the action plans so far submitted by district health authorities to regional health authorities outlining their proposals for accommodating employees in line with HC(85)19, were implemented;

(2) how many units of accommodation in nursing hostels would be sold off if the action plans so far submitted by district health authorities to regional health authorities outlining their proposals for accommodating employees in line with HC(85)19, were implemented.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Claims

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time which is now being taken to process *(a)* attendance allowance claims and *(b)* mobility allowance claims.

Mr. Newton: The average time taken for a claimant to receive payment, where the claim is successful at the initial stage, is currently 8½ weeks for attendance allowance and 7½ weeks for mobility allowance.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the latest revenue allocations, activity and staffing figures for Yorkshire regional health authority, and comparable figures for 1978-79.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since 1978-79 there have been considerable improvements in the provision of health care in Yorkshire regional health authority. This has been funded by real growth in resource allocation and by health authorities continuing cost improvement programmes. Key figures are given in the table.

Expenditure	*1978-79 £ million*	*1986-87 £ million*	*Increase £ million*	*Real percentage increase*
Revenue cash allocation	310·1	739·8	429·7	22·1

Activity	*1978*	*1984*	*Increase*	*Percentage increase*
Inpatient cases	430,516	499,895	69,379	16·1
Day cases	55,097	72,718	17,621	32
Outpatient cases	2,505,897	2,792,918	287,021	11·5
Kidney treatment (end stage renal failure) all cases	253	566	313	123·7
Geriatric inpatients	27,542	39,096	11,554	42

Manpower	*1978*	*September 1985 (provisional)*	*Increase*	*Percentage increase*
Nurses and midwives† (including agency staff)	26,690	*30,220	3,530	13·2
Doctors† and dentists including locums	2,448	2,738	290	11·9
Professions allied to medicines‡	1,710	2,370	660	38·5
The number of independent contractors providing primary health care services in the region has also increased				
General practitioners	2,392	2,797	405	16·9
General dental practitioners	791	972	181	22·9

* Contract hours reduced from 40 to 37½ per week in 1980.
† Indicates figures are whole time equivalents.
‡ All figures whole time equivalent rounded to the nearest ten.
The 1978 figure is as close as possible to the current definition of PAM staff, but may differ slightly since this category did not exist in 1978.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the latest revenue allocations, activity and staffing figures for Trent regional health authority, and comparable figures for 1978-79.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since 1978-79 there have been considerable improvements in the provision of health care in Trent regional health authority. This has been funded by real growth in resource allocation and by health authorities continuing cost improvement programmes. Key figures are given in the table.

	1978-79 £ *million*	*1986-87* £ *million*	*Increase* £ *million*	*Real per cent. increase*
Expenditure				
Revenue Cash Allocation	365·9	906·7	540·8	28

Activity	*1978*	*1984*	*Increase*	*Per cent.*
In-patient cases	461,229	557,930	96,701	21
Day cases	42,083	80,159	38,076	90·5
Outpatient cases	2,798,506	3,233,624	435,118	15·5
Kidney treatment all cases (end stage renal failure)	435	958	523	120·2
Geriatric Inpatients	25,411	36,420	11,009	43·3

Manpower	*1978*	*September 1985 (provisional)*	*Increase*	*Per cent. increase*
Nurses and Midwives† (including agency staff)	30,520	*36,670	6,150	20·1
Doctors†	2,851	3,606	755	26·5
Dentists‡				
Professions Allied to Medicine‡	1,930	3,040	1,110	57·4
The number of independent contractors providing primary health care services in the Region has also increased.				
General Practitioners	2,818	3,340	522	18·5
General Dental Practitioners	865	1,087	222	25·7

* Contract hours reduced from 40 to 37½ per week in 1980.
† Indicates figures are whole time equivalents.
‡ All figures whole time equivalents rounded to the nearest ten.
The 1978 figure is as close as possible to the current definition of PAM staff but may differ slightly since this category did not exist in 1978.

Dentistry (Statistics)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what has been the proportion of five-year-olds with dental decay in each year since 1974;

(2) what has been the proportion of people with no remaining natural teeth in each year since 1974.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Dental Treatment (Capitation Fees)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list those areas covered by the pilot scheme of capitation fees for dentists for child patients;

(2) if he will list those areas to be covered by the extended experiment in paying capitation fees for dentists for child patients.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Dental Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of persons per general dental practitioner by health district.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Primary Health Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library the data on which paragraph 7 of chapter 6 of the Green Paper on "Primary Health Care" is based.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the performance indicators established for family practitioner committees.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Medicines (Costs)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what has been the cost in each year since 1979 of medicines prescribed by doctors and dentists;

(2) what has been the cost in each year since 1979 of dispensing medicines prescribed by doctors and dentists.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

General Practice (Premises)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown of the total spent in each year since 1979 by the Government on premises for general practice in both cash and constant prices.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Doctors

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many doctors are practising who began their medical training in 1979 or afterwards.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the average number of patients on a general practitioner's list in each year since 1974.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bonamia Disease

Sir David Price asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from representatives of the Shellfish Association and the Southern Sea Fisheries Committee in respect of Bonamia disease in oysterages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The disease Bonamia has recently been found in oyster beds at Poole harbour and in the Solent area and all holders of licences permitted to deposit molluscan shellfish from these areas have been notified. My officials recently met representatives of the Shellfish Association of Great Britain and the Southern Sea Fisheries Committee to discuss the present situation and are now urgently reviewing all aspects of policy on Bonamia.

Agriculture (Support)

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total cost in the United Kingdom of support for the agriculture industry in 1985; and what proportion he estimates of the total cost of *(a)* food production and *(b)* food purchase by customers, this represents.

Mrs. Fenner: The estimate provision for voted expenditure in the United Kingdom on agriculture, fisheries and food, before deducting receipts of £1,781 million (mainly contributions from the European Community), was £3,170 million in 1985-86. This represents about one quarter of the value of agricultural gross output and fish landings estimated for 1985 and just under one-tenth of estimated total expenditure on food by consumers, including caterers.

It should be noted that the total expenditure includes that on food R & D, flood protection, forestry and administration which does not necessarily benefit directly the farming sector.

Agricultural Employees

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of full-time employees employed in agriculture at the latest available date compared with 1956, 1966 and 1976; and if he will provide separate figures for horticulture.

Mrs. Fenner: Numbers of regular whole-time workers employed in agriculture and horticulture in England and Wales, as recorded in the annual June census for the years 1956, 1966, 1976 and 1985, are shown in the table below. Figures for workers employed in horticulture are not separately available.

	Total Regular Whole Time Workers (a) ('000)
1956	454·7
1966	294·7
1976	184·0
1985	139·5

(a) Total regular whole-time workers comprise regular whole-time family workers, male and female; regular whole-time hired workers, male and female; and salaried managers.

Frozen Foods

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to seek to renegotiate the tariffs applied to imports into Spain of frozen vegetables from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: Yes. We are actively seeking a reduction in the Spanish tariff on frozen peas.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the implications to the Spanish market of frozen vegetables from the United Kingdom of the increase in tariffs on such goods imposed by the Spanish Government since Spain's accession to the European Economic Community.

Mrs. Fenner: It is difficult at this stage to make any precise assessment, but clearly an increase in the tariff will be unhelpful to our exporters.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when Her Majesty's Government first became aware of that the terms of the Spanish Treaty of Accession to the European Economic Community would increase the duty on frozen vegetable exports from the United Kingdom to Spain from 4·1 per cent. to 15·7 per cent.; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why Her Majesty's Government agreed to those provisions of the Spanish Treaty of Accession to the European Economic Community which had the effect of increasing the duty on exports of frozen vegetables from the United Kingdom to Spain; what steps were taken to negotiate more favourable terms for the United Kingdom in this regard; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I refer the hon. Member to my replies of 8 April at column *35* and 11 April at column *203*.

European Community Currency Unit

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what value was attached to the dollar in terms of the market rate for the European currency unit for the current European Economic Community budget; how this compares with the current value; and what is the relationship between the value of the dollar and expenditure under the budget.

Mr. Gummer: In drawing up their estimates of agricultural expenditure for the 1986 budget the Commission assumed a rate of 1·20 ecu to the US dollar. For the week ending 29 April 1986 the rate was 1·03 ecu to the dollar.

The prices for commodities in world markets are commonly expressed in US dollars so a fall in the dollar generally leads to increased Community expenditure on export refunds and aids in certain sectors, while a rise in the dollar tends to reduce expenditure. However a change in the value of the dollar sometimes causes an offsetting movement in world prices which means that there is not a simple relationship between the value of the dollar and agricultural expenditure.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about *(a)* food subsidies, *(b)* loans, grants or subsidies for new holdings, *(c)* the same for renovation, *(d)* subsidisation of port facilities and *(e)* subsidisation of repair yards and facilities for the fishing industry in Denmark, France, Holland and Spain.

Mr. Gummer: The responsibility for monitoring national aids rests with the European Commission. We do not attempt to duplicate this work by maintaining a full inventory of such aids. However, we are constantly on the alert for national aids which appear to breach the treaty and are ready to refer substantiated cases to the Commission and to press strongly for action to be taken.

Food Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the tonnage of basic foodstuffs exported by the United Kingdom to (i) other European Economic Community countries and (ii) third countries in 1983, 1984, and 1985; and how this compares with the figures for 1970.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested is published by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each has been paid.

Mr. Jopling: My Department has engaged Charles Barker Recruitment Ltd during each of the past five years. The following sums were paid:

Financial year	£
1981-82	63,303
1982-83	94,170
1983-84	75,621
1984-85	72,307
1985-86	82,254

Levies and World Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, pursuant to the reply of 21 April, *Official Report*, column *42*, concerning levies and world prices, he will also give figures for breadmaking wheat, rapeseed and dairy products other than butter.

Mrs. Fenner: Levies and monetary compensatory amounts (MCA) are fixed for common wheat, no distinction being made for different qualities. No import levies or MCAs apply to rapeseed. The information requested for milk products (other than that for butter and skimmed milk powder which was included in the earlier reply) is set out in the table.

Levy and monetary compensatory amount applicable in the United Kingdom, threshold price and notional "world price" on 9 April 1986 for milk products.

£/tonne

	**Levy applicable in the United Kingdom*	*Of which monetary compensatory amount*	*†Threshold price*	*‡Notional world price*
Cheeses				
Emmenthal	1,149	−121	2,451	1,367
Blue veined	978	−98	2,026	1,103
Parmegiano Reggiano	1,927	−140	3,762	1,981
Cheddar	1,390	−111	2,199	858
Gouda	1,091	−104	2,021	978
Whey powder	165	n.a.	353	204
Whole milk powder	1,164	−81	1,715	594
Unsweetened condensed milk	183	−16	635	487
Sweetened condensed milk	331	−18	841	558
Lactose	259	n.a.	585	355

* Levies are shown after the deduction of monetary compensatory amounts where applicable.
† Converted at the green rate of exchange.
‡ The notional world prices have been calculated by subtracting the levy applicable on 9 April from the threshold price. The resulting estimate has been converted from ECU/t at the appropriate market rate of exchange of £0·671974 = 1 ECU.
n.a. Not applicable.
All figures have been rounded to the nearest £.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect the European Economic Community price settlement will have on the figures for levies and world prices given in the reply of 21 April, *Official Report*, column *42*.

Mrs. Fenner: The main elements of the recent price settlement will not be implemented until the beginning of the 1986-87 marketing years. "World" prices, and therefore import levies, are influenced by many factors: furthermore, monetary compensatory amounts determined for the United Kingdom depend on the strength of sterling and may vary weekly. It is, therefore, not possible to predict accurately future levels of levies and "world" prices.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the dollar cross-rate of exchange used in calculating the world prices referred to in the answer of 21 April, *Official Report*, column *42*.

Mrs. Fenner: The implicit exchange rate was £1=1·465 US dollars.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report*, a table showing the amount set aside in the budget for the common agricultural policy each year since 1972 and the amount actually spent; and what is the forecast for the current year.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Hill Farming

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for 1984 and 1985 and give his estimate for the current year of the grants and subsidies for hill farming referred to in the reply of 8 May 1985, *Official Report*, column *459*; if he will provide separate figures for sheep, including the pro-rata contribution on sheepmeat subsidy; and if he will state the total taxpayer contribution to the production of hill sheep as a percentage of the farmer's return on the animal.

Mr. Jopling: The latest figures available in the form given in the earlier reply are for calendar year 1984.

Grant Paid in 1984

	£ million
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances	85·712
Development Plans	32·398
Joint Investment Schemes	0·041
Total	118·151

Further details on less favoured area support are given in part IV of table 28 of the "Annual Review of Agriculture 1986", including a forecast for grant paid in the financial year 1985-86.

It is not possible to identify how much of the support under the Community sheepmeat regime is paid to hill farmers; the variable premium is paid on slaughter lambs, and those originating from hill farms are not separately identified in the figures.

I regret that, as a result, meaningful estimates of the taxpayers' contribution to the production of hill sheep cannot be made.

Agriculture Costs

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the cost of support to United Kingdom agriculture directly and indirectly in the current year; and what was the comparable average figure for the years 1967 to 1970.

Mr. Jopling: Total provision, net of receipts, for expenditure by the three agricultural Departments and the intervention board for agricultural produce on agriculture, fisheries and food, including land drainage and flood protection and agency services provided by other public bodies, in 1986-87 is:

	£ million
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	504
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	130
Welsh Office	43
Intervention Board for Agricultural produce	375
Total	1,052

Outturn figures for the financial years 1967-68 to 1970-71 are set out in the table:

£ million

	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*	315	304	312	343
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	59	59	62	67
Total	374	363	374	410

* includes Wales.

Trichinella Spiralis

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why testing for trichinella spiralis is not carried out in-house by the state veterinary service.

Mrs. Fenner: The arrangements in force were set up to comply with a German requirement that testing be carried out close to the slaughterhouse.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the cost per carcase if current testing for trichinella spiralis was carried out within the state veterinary service.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

British Sherry

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *440*, why the provisions on British sherry in article 129 of the Treaty of Accession of Spain and Portugal required to be enacted as a means of providing for the continued use of this description; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Agricultural Holdings

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will bring up to date the information on the size and ownership of agricultural holdings given in his answer of 22 July 1982, *Official Report*, columns 251-4.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Beef and Butter Intervention Storage

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *317-8*, what is the total, current annual cost of beef and butter intervention storage in the Greater London area.

Mr. Jopling: Storage costs at individual stores vary according to the quantities held, which fluctuate, and are not recorded separately for particular areas. Total intervention storage and related costs for beef and butter in the 1985-86 financial year are estimated at £42 million.

Agricultural Expenditure

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new areas of spending by national government on agriculture are permitted or obliged under the 1986 farm price review proposals; what restrictions have been placed under the agreement on the extent of such national funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 May 1986, c. *476*]: As part of the CAP price fixing agreement reached on 25 April member states will be permitted to top up Community payments under the milk quota buy-up scheme. The detailed rules for this remain to be fixed. Also member states will be permitted to fix and provide short-term private storage aid for wine; and the Council agreed a reduction in the Community's reimbursement to member states for their national expenditure on the financing and technical costs of intervention storage.

If member states adopt national measures affecting agriculture they are required to ensure that they are in accordance with the state aids provisions of the treaty of Rome.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Tests (British Service Men)

Mr. Clay asked the Prime Minister when she will reply to letters sent to her on 9 January and 21 April from Mr. Ken McGinley, chairman of the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association, asking if she will set up a full judicial inquiry into the current health of British service men who took part in nuclear tests between 1952 and 1958; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Prime Minister has asked me, as the appropriate Defence Minister, to reply to both letters from Mr. McGinley. A reply to his letter of 9 January was sent on 29 January and I have today replied to his letter of 21 April.

EC Budget (United Kingdom Contributions)

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister to what extent under the terms of the Fontainebleau agreement, the United Kingdom abatement of European Economic contributions for the 1985 budget year and beyond is dependent on United Kingdom agreement to supplementary European Economic Community budgets.

Mr. Lawson: I have been asked to reply.

Under the Fontainebleau agreement, the figure for the United Kingdom's abatement in the main Community budget each year is an estimate of our true entitlement, based on preliminary information about our contributions to and receipts from the Community in the previous year. Because the initial provision is an estimate, it has to be corrected in the light of outturn information. Under the agreed methodology, this correction is done through a supplementary budget. The United Kingdom would judge on their own merits any expenditure proposals the Commission chose to include in such a supplementary.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much is raised under each schedule of income tax; how much taxpayers pay under each schedule; and if he will indicate how many taxpayers pay under more than one schedule.

Mr. Moore: I regret the delay in providing this answer. The table below gives an analysis by schedule of the income tax receipts expected in 1986-87. It is not possible to provide reliable estimates for a more detailed analysis.

Income Tax Receipts, 1986-87

	£ million
Schedules A, B, and D, net of repayments (including composite rate tax on Bank and Building Society interest)	7,000
Schedule E, net of repayments	35,700
Schedule C (tax deducted from gilts)	2,700
Additional tax on investment income taxed at source	450
Tax on company payments (debenture interest)	450
Other income tax	750
Repayments under the life assurance premium relief at source scheme	−550
Repayments under the MIRAS scheme	−3,950
Other repayments (mainly to tax exempt institutions)	−4,050
Total	38,500

About 20,450,000 single people and married couples are expected to pay income tax in 1986-87. Estimates of those paying under certain schedules are:

Single people and Married Couples

Schedule	*thousands*
A	350
B	*
C	850
D	†7,600
E	14,100

* less than 1,000.

† including those with both earned and unearned income, but excluding many basic rate taxpayers with small amounts of income under Schedule D with tax deducted at source.

I regret that it is not possible to give reliable estimates of taxpayers under other schedules, nor of those liable under more than one schedule.

Money Supply

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in the broad money supply since May 1979 in cash and in percentage terms; and how he estimates the additional money has been distributed.

Mr. Ian Stewart: From mid May 1979 to mid March 1986, £M3 increased by £69·1 billion, or by 123·0 per cent. (adjusted to take acccount of the revised definition of the monetary sector introduced in 1981).

Figures for £M3 held by various categories of holder are given in Financial Statistics, tables 14.1 to 14.4.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage increase in the supply of broad money in real terms between February 1974 and May 1979 and between May 1979 and the latest available date.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Information on broad money and nominal GDP is available in *Economic Trends*.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the recent changes in the velocity of money; what effects the changes have had on the economy; and what plans he has for further controls.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the speech by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the Lombard Association on 16 April, a copy of which has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the increase in the value of the yen and the deutschemark in each quarter since the beginning of 1983, on the basis of 1983=100.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Effective exchange rates for the yen and deutschemark are available in the International Monetary Fund publication, "International Financial Statistics".

Tokyo Summit

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the world economic summit in Tokyo.

Mr. MacGregor: The Tokyo economic summit concluded today. It is usual for the Prime Minister to make a statement to the House on the outcome.

European Monetary System

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will ask the EEC Commission to make a report to the Council on the effect of the recent European monetary system realignment on areas of expenditure other than agriculture and on own resources revenue.

Mr. Brooke: The Commission has already been asked to provide details of the overall budgetary effects of the EMS realignment, but have declined so far to provide information on items other than CAP expenditure.

National Insurance

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on Exchequer revenues of removing the half tax relief from class 4 national insurance contributions.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each has been paid.

Mr. Brooke: The following advertising agencies have been engaged over the past five years in connection with privatisation:

BP 1983
Cable and Wireless 1983
Britoil 1985
Cable and Wireless 1985
St James's Advertising & Street's Advertising
Street's Financial Advertising
Dewe Rogerson Ltd.
Collett Dickinson, Pearce and Partners Ltd.

It is not the practice to disclose the value of individual contracts between the Government and its advisers.

Excise Duties

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the estimated receipts in 1985-86 and 1986-87 from excise duties on spirits, beer, wine, made wine, cider and perry, respectively; and if he will explain any differences or special factors.

Mr. Brooke: The estimates are as follows:

	*1985-86 £ Million**	*1986-87 £ Million†*
Spirits	1,500	1,600
Beer	1,960	2,010
Wine	630	640
Made-wine	55	60
Cider and perry	50	50
TOTAL	4,195	4,360

* Latest estimates
† Forecast

Value Added Tax

Mr. Buchan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what value added tax was due, deductible, and payable, or repayable, in each financial year for which figures are available since 1973-74, in the United Kingdom, on *(a)* all cultural events, *(b)* artists and authors, and so on, *(c)* cinemas, *(d)* theatres, music halls, radio and television services, films and recording studios, and so on, *(e)* public libraries, museums and galleries and *(f)* performers and performing groups.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the number of businesses registered for value added tax at the latest convenient dates within the following turnover bands: £0, £1-£19,500.

£19,500-£49,500, £50,000-£99,000, £100,000-£499,000, £500,000-£1,999,000 and £2,000,000-plus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 May 1986, c. *530*]: I regret that it is not possible to provide details for all of the turnover bands requested by my hon. Friend. The information available is as follows:

Turnover (£)	*Number of registered businesses (as at 31/12/84)*
0	46,100*
1-19,999	215,400
20,000-49,999	401,400
50,000-99,999	287,000
100,000-249,999	261,600
Over 249,999	232,500
Total	1,444,000

* Represents businesses not now trading (about 45 per cent.), plus those who have not submitted returns.

Agriculture (Expenditure Limits)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what limit on *(a)* overall and *(b)* agricultural spending has been set by the European Economic Community Council of Ministers for 1987; and how this compares with the equivalent figures for 1986;

(2) if he will estimate *(a)* overall and *(b)* agricultural spending by the European Economic Community in 1986; what were the limits on spending set in 1985; what are the implications for the budgetary discipline framework agreed at Fontainebleau; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

EC (Expenditure)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the maximum expenditure of the European Economic Community entailed by the 1·4 per cent. value added tax ceiling and Fontainebleau arrangement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: In 1986, the maximum expenditure of the EEC entailed by the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling and the Fontainebleau arrangement is likely to be about 35 billion ecus (£22·5 billion).

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the recent increase in the value added tax contribution to the EEC budget will be taken up by an increase in non-agricultural spending after allowing for the growth of own resources in real terms; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the increase in EEC expenditure in real terms each year since 1979 in relation to the increase in United Kingdom Government expenditure.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

EC (Budget)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1972 the appropriation for the European Economic Community budget and the amount of any supplementary budgets for *(a)* agriculture, *(b)* other purposes and *(c)* the amount actually spent; and if he will provide the estimate for the current year and the forecast for 1987.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Agriculture (Self-employed Persons)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date the information on self-employed agricultural incomes and tax given in his answers of 14 March and 26 March 1985, *Official Report*, columns *157-8*.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date and publish in the *Official Report* the table on farm incomes given in his Department's reply dated 9 November 1984 to question 4r of the questionnaire from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on the economic consequences of United Kingdom membership of the European Economic Community.

Mrs. Fenner: I have been asked to reply.

The table shows the estimated number and total income assessed for tax of all single persons and married couples in the United Kingdom, with an identifiable self-employment income from agriculture and or horticulture by range of total income for 1977-78 to 1983-84. Data are not available prior to 1977-78.

*Distribution of the number and total income assessed for tax of all single persons and married couples with a self-employment income from agriculture and or horticulture by range of total income**

United Kingdom 1977-78—1983-84

Range of total income	*1977-78*		*1978-79*		*1979-80*		*1980-81*		*1981-82*		*1982-83*		*1983-84*	
	Number ** '000	*Total income* £ million	*Number* ** '000	*Total income* £ million	*Number* ** '000	*Total income* £ million	*Number* ** '000	*Total income* £ million	*Number* ** '000	*Total income* £ million	*Number* ** '000	*Total income* £ million	*Number* ** '000	*Total income* £ million
Nil (including losses)	1·5	−2·1	1·6	−2·2	3·4	−3·8	2·8	−2·7	4·6	−2·8	4·6	−2·0	0·4	−2·1
1-1,999	68·0	85·1	56·4	71·6	49·5	60·8	38·8	51·2	40·3	45·0	34·4	43·6	98·1	240·7
2,000-3,999	87·4	252·3	90·2	260·8	81·1	241·5	79·9	236·9	70·0	212·8	67·4	202·9		
4,000-5,999	50·5	247·6	48·5	239·9	55·3	269·6	46·2	225·3	49·1	245·0	52·1	258·0	50·0	250·3
6,000-7,999	23·9	165·6	23·9	165·5	33·2	231·1	33·0	226·1	31·4	216·4	35·2	242·7	37·5	257·2
8,000-9,999	12·2	107·6	15·5	138·7	16·7	149·1	17·8	156·6	23·0	205·4	26·9	241·2	48·2	161·3
10,000-14,999	15·7	185·4	19·4	230·8	20·0	241·0	21·9	260·2	36·0	419·8	36·8	451·5	38·4	463·0
15,000-19,999	5·6	95·7	6·5	112·4	8·5	146·8	8·6	148·2	10·7	182·8	13·5	232·5	15·7	271·3

Range of total income	1977-78		1978-79		1979-80		1980-81		1981-82		1982-83		1983-84	
	Number ** '000	Total income £ million	Number ** '000	Total income £ million	Number ** '000	Total income £ million	Number ** '000	Total income £ million	Number ** '000	Total income £ million	Number ** '000	Total income £ million	Number ** '000	Total income £ million
20,000-29,999	4·8	131·7	4·1	93·9	5·9	141·8	7·5	181·3	9·4	225·9	10·1	243·5	11·2	271·4
30,000-49,999			1·6	56·1	2·9	113·6	3·8	144·8	4·5	165·6	4·4	165·9	7·2	265·9
50,000-99,999	0·6	35·2	0·6	42·1	0·5	35·5	0·9	56·4	1·6	107·3	1·9	128·5	2·1	135·6
100,000 and over	0·1	12·1	0·1	12·0	0·3	39·9	0·3	42·5	0·3	50·8	0·3	55·2	0·5	93·1
All ranges	270·3	1,316·1	268·4	1,421·6	277·3	1,666·9	261·5	1,726·8	280·9	2,074·0	287·6	2,263·5	279·3	2,407·7

Source: Survey of Personal Incomes, Inland Revenue.

Notes:

* This table covers single persons and married couples with an indentifiable self-employment income from agriculture and/or horticulture regardless of the size of their total income. Agriculture and horticulture is defined according to the 1969 Classification Index for 1977-78—1980-81. The 1981 classification index was employed from 1981-82.

** Indicates number calculated as falling in each income range with married couples counting as one.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the time lag between changes in the exchange rate and changes in the balance of trade in manufactures; what rate of exchange is reflected in trade in manufactures in the first quarter of the current year; what is the cause of the fall in exports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 May 1986, c, *478*]: There can be no unique estimate of the effect of changes in the exchange rate on the balance of trade in manufactures. It will depend on a whole range of price, wage and output responses in the economy. Changes in the balance of trade in manufactures from quarter to quarter reflect many factors, and cannot be related to a particular exchange rate. The April CBI survey showed an improvement both in optimism with regard to export prospects and in new export orders for the next four months.

Income Tax

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons have been taken out of tax following each budget since 1960; and how many persons had become liable for tax each year by the time of the following budget.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 April 1986, c. *92*]: Information in the form requested is readily available only for Budgets since 1979. The table shows the latest estimates of the numbers of taxpayers in each year and the numbers who would have paid tax if allowances had remained unchanged in the previous budget.

Thousands

	Number of taxpayers*	Number of taxpayers* if allowances had remained at the level of the previous year	Difference
1978-79	25,900	..	..
1979-80	25,900	27,200	1,300
1980-81	25,200	26,500	1,300
1981-82	24,800	24,800	0
1982-83	24,600	25,800	1,200
1983-84†	24,300	25,600	1,300
1984-85†	24,050	25,050	1,000
1985-86†	24,000	24,850	850
1986-87†	24,050	24,600	550

* including taxpaying wives.

† provisional.

DEFENCE

Plastic Bullets

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many British soldiers have been subjected to internal disciplinary procedures during the period 1970 to 1985, inclusive, as a result of their use of baton rounds in Northern Ireland, indicating the nature of the charge and the outcome of the procedure in each case.

Mr. Lee: Records are not maintained in a form which would enable the information requested to be provided without disproportionate effort.

US Military Facilities

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list the bilateral agreements between the United Kingdom and the United States of America regarding the presence of United States military facilities.

Mr. Stanley: I shall write to the hon. Lady.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Defence which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each have been paid.

Mr. John Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Nuclear Weapons-Related Activities (Scotland)

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of jobs in Scotland dependent on nuclear weapons-related activities; and how many are in the west of Scotland and the east of Scotland, respectively.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall write to my hon. Friend on this subject as soon as possible.

Royal Marines, Arbroath and Locking

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to base additional units at the Royal Marines base, Condor, Arbroath, or at Royal Air Force Locking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have recently agreed in principle to make part of the Royal Marines base Condor at Arbroath and RAF Locking available to the United States' Navy for use as a peacetime storage facility and as a hospital which would be activated in the event of war.

Nuclear Stockpiles, Europe

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence which improvement measures are being undertaken by the United Kingdom to implement the Montebello decision of October 1985 on land-based nuclear stockpiles in Europe following on from the nuclear planning group.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 28 April, at column *331*.

Exercise Elder Forest

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the recent North Atlantic Treaty Organisation exercise Elder Forest.

Mr. Stanley: Elder Forest is the name of a routine NATO exercise which takes place every other year and is designed to test the United Kingdom air defences. This year's exercise was held between 21-24 April and aircraft of nine NATO countries, including France, took part. Planning for the exercise commenced in mid-1985 and it was unconnected with the recent USAF operation against terrorist targets in Libya.

Universities

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what formal links exist between universities and his Department, other than the awarding of research contracts.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have joined the research councils in making available joint research grants for work of high scientific merit and relevance to defence in the academic sector.

The Ministry of Defence has other links with the research councils at various levels, and the Chief Scientific Adviser is a member of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Work is in hand to achieve greater collaboration with the academic sector in the provision and use of research facilities and there is to be a meeting held annually under ABRC auspices to review the MOD's and the research councils' capital investment plans: the inaugural meeting was held on 20 March 1986.

The Ministry of Defence has a sponsorship scheme to assist students wishing to study engineering and science at university. It also sponsors defence lectureships at several universities.

There are finally various arrangements between individual MOD research establishments and institutions of higher education with a mutual interest of particular lines of research.

Research Contracts

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list Ministry of Defence research contracts currently placed with British universities and other educational establishments.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Ministry of Defence has currently 757 research agreements and a small number of contracts with British universities and other institutions of higher education at an annual cost of some £10 million a year, which is planned to increase. It would involve disproportionate effort to list each research agreement, but if the hon. Gentleman has any specific area of interest, I will see what can be done to help him.

Libya

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, on Friday 11 April, he had in his possession information which clearly set out the differences between the equipment carried by airplanes based on aircraft carriers of the United States Navy and F111 aircraft based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: As the President of the United States made clear, F111 aircraft operating from bases in the United Kingdom were essential for the United States action against Libya, because of their special characteristics which would provide the safest means of achieving the particular objectives with the lowest possible risk of Libyan civilian and United States service casualties. This stemmed from their advanced avionics and precision strike capabilities. The detailed arrangements for the operation were a matter for the United States within the strict criteria set by Her Majesty's Government, that action should be against specific targets demonstrably involved in the conduct and support of terrorist activities. My right hon. Friend has, of course, long been generally aware of the capabilities of these types of United States aircraft.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn on 18 November 1985, *Official Report*, column *212*, why it is not regarded as in the national interest to identify the purpose of each nuclear test undertaken for the United Kingdom nuclear weapons programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 10 March 1986 at column *369*.

NATO (Defence Planning Committee)

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's defence planning committee; and what subjects it is currently considering.

Mr. Stanley: NATO's Defence Planning Committee is the co-ordinating and decision making body for all questions concerning the integrated military structure. It meets regularly at ambassadorial level, and twice a year at ministerial level, to consider a range of allied defence planning issues. Further information on the role of the Defence Planning Committee is contained in "The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation: Facts and figures", a copy of which is in the Library. A summary of the main issues discussed is given in the communiqué issued after each Ministerial meeting of the Defence Planning Committee, copies of which are in the Library.

Assault Ships

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the design study for the assault ships to replace HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid.

Mr. Lee: I have nothing to add to my answer of 11 February at column *772*.

Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent by his Department on official hospitality in the financial years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested is as follows:

	£
1983-84	2,298,507
1984-85	2,620,809
1985-86	2,803,890

The amounts quoted represent total expenditure borne on defence votes for the provision of official entertainment. They therefore include expenditure incurred not only by the Ministry of Defence itself, but also by formations and establishments of the armed forces at home and abroad and by individual officers occupying command and international appointments for which entertainment allowances are payable.

Armed United States Personnel

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Defence what authority is required by United States service personnel to carry weapons in the United Kingdom; what authority has been given to United States personnel to carry weapons on streets in central London; what representations he has received about this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement regarding the presence of armed United States marines from the United States Embassy on the streets of London on the morning of 24 April.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 April 1986, c. *375*]: It is not a contravention of United Kingdom law for United States service men to carry arms in the United Kingdom, if they do so on duty authorised by their superiors. This arises by virtue of an extension of the provision in the firearms legislation exempting United Kingdom service men from its provisions, which has been applied to visiting forces by means of an order made in 1965 under section 8 of the Visiting Forces Act 1952. The authorisation for the United States service men will be a matter for their service superiors. Article VII paragraph 10 of the NATO status of forces agreement imposes certain restrictions on those areas where they can carry arms. I understand from the United States authorities that no armed United States service men were deployed from their normal posts in the vicinity of the Oxford street bombing on 24 April.

I have also replied to a question on this matter from the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 28 April at column 333.

ENERGY

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay Asked the Secretary of State for Energy which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each has been paid.

Mr. Peter Walker: Advertising expenditure by my Department by agency in each of the last five years was:

Year and Advertising Agency	*Amount spent with Agency* £
1981-82	
Young and Rubicam	3,240,000
Charles Barker	16,500
1982-83	
Young and Rubicam	1,160,000
Charles Barker	20,600
1983-84	
Young and Rubicam	1,630,000
Charles Barker	31,400
1984-85	
Young and Rubicam	1,660,000
Doyle Dane Bernbach	2,567,000
Charles Barker	57,000
1985-86	
Doyle Dane Bernbach	8,987
Saatchi and Saatchi	4,182,000
Charles Barker	121,000

Oil Prices

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has quantified the effect of the drop in the oil price on employment in oil related industries *(a)* offshore on the United Kingdom continental shelf and *(b)* onshore in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is too early to be able to quantify the effect of the drop in oil prices on employment in the industry. A substantial proportion of oil related employment is committed to the support of fields already in production. The oil price is still well above the average cost of production in the United Kingdom and on the United Kingdom continental shelf. So far as employment related to exploration and development is concerned, the stable political and fiscal regime here continues to attract the oil industry. Already this year I have approved three oil projects, four gas projects and a pipeline. The oil industry is naturally reviewing its plans, but it is its perception of prices in the 1990s and beyond, rather than current levels, which will determine longer-term investment decisions.

European Demonstration Reprocessing Plant

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the safeguards arrangements to apply to the proposed European demonstration reprocessing plant at Dounreay contain any provisions for the withdrawal of nuclear materials from safeguards for national security reasons.

Mr. Goodlad: As a civil nuclear facility the proposed European demonstration reprocessing plant at Dounreay would be subject to Euratom safeguards inspections and th provisions of the UK-IAEA-Euratom safeguards agreement.

Article 14 of the agreement provides for the withdrawal of nuclear material for national security reasons. However, in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 23 December 1982, at column 668, my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr.

Moore) said that the Government have no plans for putting to military use any plutonium derived from the United Kingdom civil nuclear programme. The fast reactor programme at Dounreay is part of the civil nuclear programme.

Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether any plutonium exported for civil purposes from the United Kingdom has ever been subsequently re-transferred to a different state with the prior knowledge and consent of the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Goodlad: Yes. In each instance where permission for re-transfer was granted, the new recipient of the material gave assurances on peaceful end use and the application of international safeguards.

Public Bodies (Official Secrets Act)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many staff members of the *(a)* Central Electricity Generating Board, *(b)* South of Scotland Electricity Board, *(c)* United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, *(d)* National Nuclear Corporation and *(e)* British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. are respectively, required to sign the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Goodlad: The provisions of the Official Secrets Acts apply to all those who have access to official information. It is a matter for the organisation concerned to decide whether to draw this fact to the attention of its staff by requiring them to sign a formal declaration. This information is not held centrally and could not be obtained without considerable difficulty.

Nuclear Safeguards, Sellafield

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects an agreement to be reached between Her Majesty's Government and the European Commissioner over article 36 of Commission resolution 3227/76 concerning the application of nuclear safeguards to the Magnox spent fuel material balance area at Sellafield.

Mr. Goodlad: I expect to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy why Her Majesty's Government instructed British Nuclear Fuels plc's safeguards staff not to answer detailed questions on safeguards during the official visit to Sellafield on 17 March by members of the European Parliament, Messrs. Llewellyn, Smith and Amédée Turner.

Mr. Peter Walker: No instructions were given by my Department that BNFL should not answer questions by Members of the European Parliament. However, the Department and BNFL agreed that it would not be appropriate for the company to answer questions on the detail of the discussions which have been taking place between Euratom and the United Kingdom, as these are confidential.

Nuclear Safeguards (Thurso Inquiry)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether it was on his instructions that the witness from his Department at the European demonstration reprocessing plant public inquiry at Thurso refused to answer detailed questions on the application of nuclear safeguards to facilities and nuclear materials under cross-examination on 8 April.

Mr. Goodlad: The witness representing my Department answered all questions put to him which the inquiry reporter ruled were relevant to the inquiry.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 7 May 1986

TRANSPORT

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many leakages of radiation have occurred since 1979 in the transport of nuclear waste to the disposal site.

Mr. Ridley: None.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents involving pollution have occurred since 1979 during the transfer of Japanese spent fuel via Barrow and Immingham; if his Department has been monitoring pollution as a result of transporting foreign radioactive material through the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: There have been no accidents involving escape of radioactivity during the transport of spent fuel. The only accidental radioactivity recorded since 1979 was transported by the wind last week from Chernobyl. Monitoring of fuel consignments from Japan is carried out during each voyage, on arrival in the United Kingdom and on receipt at Sellafield. Any abnormal condition is reported to my Department.

Lorry Drivers (Hours)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the objections registered by the United Kingdom road transport unions against the introduction of the new European Economic Community regulations relating to lorry drivers' hours and rest periods at the meeting of 30 April; what were his replies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: When my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for roads and traffic met officials of the Transport and General Workers Union on 30 April they expressed their concern that the greater flexibility incorporated in the new regulations, and the proposals to amend the provisions of the Transport Act 1968, would make enforcement more difficult and might lead to increased driver fatigue. My hon. Friend pointed out that the regulations provide for less driving time, longer rest and break periods, and greater scope for drivers to arrange their work schedules to suit their own needs.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport for what reason, and on what basis, a document has been drawn up by his Department purporting to lay out a timetable for the consideration by the House of the Channel Tunnel Bill; what criteria were used and what assumptions made in the choice of dates contained in the document, with particular reference to the duration of the proceedings of any Select Committee to which the Bill may be committed; to whom this document has been issued; if he will place a copy in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The document referred to is entitled "Channel Tunnel Bill: Possible Timetable". It was prepared as an internal working document for planning purposes on the basis outlined in the Channel fixed link White Paper (Cmnd. 9735) that the Bill would be introduced in the spring with the aim of obtaining Royal Assent in the early summer of 1987. The dates included in the document are guesses. The actual timetable will, of course, be determined by Parliament. The document was made available to assist the Kent Channel Tunnel Joint Consultative Committee in planning its work. I am placing a copy in the Library.

Motorways (Lighting)

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further consideration has been given to lighting those parts of the M1 and M6 motorways at present unlit.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The night time accident rate on all motorways is kept under review and lighting is considered whenever a serious accident problem develops. Lighting is being installed at present on the M1 in Northamptonshire south of junction 16 to south of junction 15 and work will commence on the section north from Newport Pagnell service area to south of junction 15 later this year. The installation of lighting on the M6 between junction 29 and 32 is currently being considered.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further consideration has been given to lighting those parts of the motorways at present unlit in the north-west region.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Detailed examination is currently being given to the provision of lighting on the M6 between junctions 29 and 32 at Preston. The situation in the region is constantly monitored.

Helicopter Rescue Service

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Transport what were the conclusions of the search and rescue services committee which met on 29 April regarding the helicopter rescue service operated from HMS Daedalus at Lee-on-Solent.

Mr. Ridley: The United Kingdom search and rescue committee concluded that a strong operational case exists for maintaining a helicopter capabiliy to operate from a location in the Solent area for civil search and rescue.

National Bus Company

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport how he proposes to meet the cost of urgent bills for expenses of the sale of National Bus Company operations.

Mr. Ridley: Parliamentary approval for this expenditure has been sought in the Main Supply Estimates (Class VIII, Vote 8). Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimates at £300,000, will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

British Airports Authority

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for Transport how he proposes to meet the cost of urgent bills for preliminary expenses of the sale of shares in the British Airports Authority.

Mr. Ridley: Parliamentary approval of this expenditure has been sought in the Main Supply Estimates (Class VIII, Vote 7). Pending approval of the Estimate, urgent expenditure estimated at £350,000 will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Baton Rounds

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many plastic bullets were fired by the Royal Ulster Constabulary in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Scott: Separate records of the number of plastic baton rounds fired by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Army were not maintained until 1 March 1981. From that date the annual figures for the Royal Ulster Constabulary are as follows:

	Number
1981*	19,649
1982	335
1983	545
1984	1,503
1985	906

* from 1 March

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the £9·5 million, approximately, which will become available from the new European regional development fund special measure for the border areas, will be made available to each of the qualifying district council areas in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: A programme for the implementation of the measure is being prepared by the Department of Economic Development for submission to the European Commission for its approval. This programme will include projects suggested by district councils, which will participate in their implementation. The Department will seek to ensure that each of the 25 eligible councils is given an oppportunity to participate.

Benefits

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to gather information on the number of suspected *(a)* Republican and *(b)* other members of paramilitary organisations in receipt of unemployment and other social benefits.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 May 1986, c. *466*]: No. Information obtained from claimants to unemployment benefit and other social security benefits is restricted to that necessary to enable the Department of Health and Social Services to consider entitlement to the benefit claimed.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which version of the Anglo-Irish agreement was lodged with the United Nations.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland texts of the Anglo-Irish agreement were registered at the United Nations on 20 December 1985.

WALES

Joint Care Funding

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money is allocated by his Department this year for joint care funding; and how this compares with expenditure over each of the past three years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall make an announcement about the level of funds available shortly.

University Hospital of Wales

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary for Wales how many patients are to be sent home from the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff, as a result of recent money-saving proposals.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No proposals have been implemented by South Glamorgan health authority at the University Hospital of Wales which have affected patient attendances.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary for Wales if he will publish figures showing the incidence of bovine tuberculosis in each of the Welsh counties for each year since 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of new herds with bovine tuberculosis in each Welsh county for each year from 1981 to 1985 is shown in the table.

County	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Clwyd	—	—	1	—	1
Dyfed	11	7	12	20	25
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	1	1
South Glamorgan	—	—	—	1	—
West Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—
Gwent	1	1	—	1	—
Gwynedd	—	—	—	2	1
Powys	—	1	—	2	—

Farmer's Lung

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary for Wales if he will publish figures showing how many cases of farmer's lung were reported in east Dyfed during 1985-86; and if he will publish the corresponding figures for each year since 1981.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is not available centrally in the form requested. The following table shows, for each of the years 1982 to 1985, the numbers of discharges of cases treated for farmer's lung at hospitals in east Dyfed.

Number of discharges

	Numbers
1982	10
1983	5
1984	2
1985	*7

* Provisional.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will initiate measures to enhance the specialist medical care for sufferers of farmer's lung by establishing a regional centre for such care in each part of Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Responsibility for the provision of facilities for the treatment of respiratory diseases, including farmer's lung, other than those requiring the special care of the regional service provision in respect of radiotherapy and thoracic surgery, lies with the district health authorities. We do not propose to initiate any changes, since the Department has not received any requests from the health authorities for the redesignation of the service offered to people suffering from farmer's lung.

School Mergers

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines his Department offers to local education authorities in the event of mergers of bilingual schools with English-medium schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Guidance on Welsh-medium provision is offered in "Welsh in Schools" published in 1981. Welsh Office circular 26/80 states that a change in the linguistic character of a maintained school would generally be regarded as significant. Where such a change was contemplated it would require publication of proposals under section 12 of the Education Act 1980 (section 13 in the case of a voluntary school).

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether the privatisation of the Welsh water authority will affect charges made for bulk supplies to other water undertakings.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Water Services plc's will be free to negotiate for bulk supplies at a commercial rate. While having regard to the general principle that charges should be cost related and should not be discriminatory, undertakers who are unable to agree terms will have the right to appeal to the Director General of Water Services; and in determining such appeals the Director General will take account of all relevant factors. The Government would expect the Director General to allow Welsh Water, like any other exporting water company, to earn a reasonable profit from the sale of bulk supplies. Equally, the Director General would be expected to ensure that monopoly situations will not be abused.

Rates

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce legislation to exempt residential homes for elderly people from liability to rates; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have been asked to reply.

Many residential homes for the elderly already receive full or partial relief from rates under the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978. The Government have no plans to legislate in this area pending the introduction of the changes in local taxation set out in the recent Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714).

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each European Economic Community country the percentage rate of unemployment in May 1979 and at the latest available date in each case, the numbers employed in manufacturing and the number of full-time adult male workers.

Mr. Lang: The available information on unemployment rates is given in the following table. The figures are based on national definitions and are not fully comparable.

Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rates

	May 1979	March 1986
Germany	3·8	9·2
France	7·2	‡10·2
Italy	7·8	‖11·1
Netherlands	6·3	15·0
Belgium	10·9	16·2
Luxembourg	*0·7	¶1·5
Ireland	7·5	18·0
Denmark	5·8	•8·0
United Kingdom†	4·7	13·2
Spain	9·2	•22·6
Greece	2·1	6·4
Portugal	n.a.	n.a.

Notes:
* Annual average.
† Excluding school leavers, adjusted for discontinuities of coverage.
‡ February.
‖ October 1985.
¶ Unadjusted.
• January.

With respect to the numbers employed in manufacturing, I refer the hon. Member to my answer on 24 April, at column 204.

Information on the number of full-time male workers in European Community countries is available from the annual labour force sample surveys, the results of which are published by the Statistical Office of the European Communities. It is to be found on page 32 of the publication containing the 1979 results, and page 92 of the one containing those for 1983, copies of both of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General how many people were employed in 1980 in Coventry in the manufacture of machine tools; and how many were employed in the last 12 months.

Mr. Lang: Employment statistics for local areas are available only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken. No census was taken in 1980, but in 1981, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 3,800 employees employed in the Coventry jobcentre area in the manufacture of metal-working machine tools (activity heading 3221 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980).

More up-to-date employment estimates for local areas will become available following publication of the 1984 census of employment later this year. Between censuses, employment estimates are based on small-scale sample inquiries which cannot produce reliable results for areas smaller than regions.

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General what has been the rise in the rate of unemployment in the Coventry, North-East constituency in the last 18 months; and what is the level of unfilled vacancies.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas. However, on 13 September 1984 there were 9,180 unemployed claimants in the Coventry, North-East constituency. The corresponding number for 6 March 1986 was 8,559, a fall over the last 18 months of 621. Comparisons over the period are affected by seasonal factors and the change in the basis of the count in March 1986. Information on the number of unfilled vacancies in the Coventry, North-East constituency is not available. However, on 7 March 1986 there were 692 unfilled vacancies at the Coventry jobcentre and 39 unfilled vacancies at the Coventry careers office.

Mr. Park asked the Paymaster General what percentage of economically active women between the ages of 16 and 60 years are in work, full-time and part-time, in the Coventry, North-East constituency.

Mr. Lang: The available information comes from the 1981 census of population and is contained in "Parliamentary Constituency Monitor" reference CEN 81 PCM 22, published on 19 May 1983, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General how many of the vacancies registered at jobcentres at the latest available date were for part-time employment.

Mr. Lang: On 7 March 1986 there were 45,229 unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in Great Britain which involved work for less than 30 hours per week, out of a total of 158,263.

Restart Scheme

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what consultation took place with the training providers prior to launching the restart scheme.

Mr. Lang: Restart courses were piloted earlier this year in nine areas by 30 providers who were consulted in the design of the revised course for the national restart programme.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what additional funds have been made available to training providers in order that they can meet the extra demand for training stimulated by the restart scheme and the action for jobs campaign.

Mr. Lang: An additional £50 million has been made available to the Manpower Services Commission in 1986-87 to enable the commission to fund short training courses through local training providers.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what percentage of funds for training under the restart scheme is targeted to meeting the needs of the unemployed ethnic minorities.

Mr. Lang: Since all registered long-term unemployed people will be eligible for the new restart courses, ethnic minorities will benefit. No specific additional funds have been made available for ethnic minorities under the restart programme.

Scottish Gospel Outreach

Mr. Martin asked the Paymaster General how much has been paid to Scottish Gospel Outreach by the Manpower Services Commission for employment projects in respect of *(a)* use of premises and facilities and *(b)* telephone and other administrative costs.

Mr. Lang: Scottish Gospel Outreach has two community programme projects funded by the Manpower Services Commission. The Manpower Services Commission has made no payments for use of premises and since April 1985 has paid respectively £1,079·55 and £1,136·00 to each project in respect of administration and other overheads costs including telephone.

Mr. Martin asked the Paymaster General if he will list the names of the supervisors of the employment projects run by Scottish Gospel Outreach on behalf of the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Gospel Outreach sponsors two community programme projects, the Helping Hands project and the Dennistoun Lunch Club project. Each of these projects has a supervisor. I shall write to the hon. Member separately on this matter.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

GATT

91. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions have been held in the European Economic Community Foreign Affairs Council concerning the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave on 9 April to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk). Discussions are expected at both this month's and next month's meetings of the EC Foreign Affairs Council.

Exports (United States Controls)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the cost to United Kingdom industry of the new United States export control régime in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not possible to estimate the cost of complying with the new United States distribution licence regulations, which depends on how often, if at all, United Kingdom companies comply. Such compliance is unlikely unless United Kingdom companies see commercial justification for doing so.

Food Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing such information as is available to

him for Spain and Portugal relating to the average price paid for basic foodstuffs imported from *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* the European Economic Community in 1985 compared with the price paid for United Kingdom imports from the European Economic Community.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is in the table. These countries import different types of food both in total and from each of the sources. Given the wide range of foodstuffs prices, averages of differing mixtures are likely to show substantial differences.

*Average price of imported foodstuffs**

£/tonne

	Imports into		
	Spain	*Portugal*	*United Kingdom*
Imports from			
USA			
1984	120	120	
1985	n.a.	110	
European Community†			
1984	420	340	510
1985	n.a.	270	490

*Taken as Standard International Trade Classification Section O.
†Membership prior to accession of Spain and Portugal.
n.a. = not readily available.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the European Economic Community percentage share of the United Kingdom market in 1975, the second quarter of 1979 and the latest available quarter in the case of man-made fibres, agricultural machinery, cotton textiles, motor vehicles, engineering, wool textiles, carpets, motor cars, chemicals and textiles generally.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates of the European Community import share of the United Kingdom market in 1975, 1979 and 1984 for the industrial sectors required are given in the table. This information is not readily available on a quarterly basis.

European Community Imports as share of United Kingdom Market*

Per cent.

	1975	*1979*	*1984*
Man-made fibres	18	29	51
Agricultural machinery	42	38	51
Cotton and silk textiles	18	25	40
Motor vehicles and engines	18	36	41
Engineering products†	14	19	23
Woolen and worsted textiles	7	13	20
Carpets	7	11	22
Passenger cars	23	44	46
Chemicals	12	19	25
Textiles	10	15	26

* Including all current members of the European Community.
† Division 3 of the Standard Industrial Classification (1980), includes metal goods, vehicles and engineering.

Timber

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total value of imports of timber to the United Kingdom for each of the past five years;

(2) what proportion of the total timber imported into the United Kingdom over the past five years is of a type which is grown commercially in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark : Information on the value of timber imports is as follows:

United Kingdom Imports of Timber

	£ Million
1981	600
1982	668
1983	932
1984	1,000
1985	*885

Source: SITC/(R2) headings 246.01, 247 and 248.
Note: Imports are valued cif.
* Provisional

Over the past five years about 70 per cent. of timber imported into the United Kingdom has been of a type that could be grown commercially in the United Kingdom.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Sackville asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the expenditure on regional development grant and regional selective assistance in each region of England, Scotland and Wales for each financial year from 1981-82 to 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information requested is given by economic planning regions in the following tables:

*(1) Payments of regional development grants**

£ million

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86†*
Scotland	142·7	287·3	143·0	109·2	107·5
Wales	122·2	121·5	72·1	92·7	84·4
Northern	143·9	127·2	101·3	89·0	66·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	47·1	36·4	23·5	26·8	24·2
East Midlands	7·2	8·8	8·2	3·8	4·4
West Midlands	·04	·1	—	—	—
South West	10·3	11·0	7·8	9·5	8·6
North West	143·4	97·3	83·0	79·9	62·1
Total	616·84	689·6	438·9	410·9	358·1

(II) Payments of regional selective assistance:

£ million

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Scotland	19·3	19·7	23·7	29·5	41·6
Wales	9·8	14·4	15·2	17·7	21·7
Northern	22·6	21·1	15·4	15·0	15·6
Yorkshire and Humberside	7·1	10·4	8·8	9·2	6·5
East Midlands	1·0	4·1	8·7	6·4	3·8
West Midlands	·02	—	—	·01	4·4
South West	1·7	2·5	1·9	1·5	1·7
North West	14·7	18·3	13·5	11·0	10·8
Total	76·22	90·5	87·2	90·31	106·1

* Payments from 1981-82 to 1983-84 relate to old style regional development grants; payments from 1984-85 relate to both old and new regional development grants.

† Provisional

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Official Development Assistance

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the amount of net official development assistance provided by Britain to developing countries in 1985 as a percentage of gross national product.

Mr. Raison: Provisional figures indicate that in 1985 Britain provided net official development assistance equivalent to 0·33 per cent. of GNP.

Gibraltar

84. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further financial aid has been granted, or is proposed to be granted, to the dependent territory of Gibraltar in the present financial year; and for what purpose this aid is to be provided.

Mr. Raison: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on 16 April at column 394.

South Africa

85. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed when his chief education adviser visited South Africa last month.

Mr. Raison: The Overseas Development Administration's chief education adviser had discussions with non-governmental organisations in South Africa about the provision of scholarships and other assistance for disadvantaged South Africans.

SCOTLAND

Mental Patients

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients have been discharged from mental illness hospitals in Scotland in each of the past six years, broken down by length of stay, age and sex.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Number of discharges (including deaths and transfers to other hospitals and institutions) from mental hospitals and psychiatric units in Scotland in 1979-1984

1979

Age groups (years)		Total	Under 4 weeks	4 weeks and under 8 weeks	8 weeks and under 26 weeks	26 weeks and under 1 year	1 year and under 2 years	2 years and under 5 years	5 years and under 10 years	10 years plus
0 to 14	Male	175	57	29	66	12	6	4	1	—
	Female	88	36	13	29	8	—	1	1	—
	Total	263	93	42	95	20	6	5	2	—
15 to 24	Male	1,114	681	195	157	50	23	6	2	—
	Female	1,199	718	213	206	42	16	3	1	—
	Total	2,313	1,399	408	363	92	39	9	3	—
25 to 44	Male	4,462	3,067	749	450	85	49	36	11	15
	Female	4,347	2,773	848	564	64	40	34	16	8
	Total	8,809	5,840	1,597	1,014	149	89	70	27	23
45 to 64	Male	3,487	2,092	699	401	84	62	63	21	65
	Female	3,979	1,879	1,132	644	109	74	62	23	56
	Total	7,466	3,971	1,831	1,045	193	136	125	44	121

Age groups (years)		Total	Under 4 weeks	4 weeks and under 8 weeks	8 weeks and under 26 weeks	26 weeks and under 1 year	1 year and under 2 years	2 years and under 5 years	5 years and under 10 years	10 years plus
65 to 74	Male	1,010	389	198	149	53	49	76	24	72
	Female	1,689	607	471	315	81	57	70	34	54
	Total	2,699	996	669	464	134	106	146	58	126
75 plus	Male	939	298	146	159	78	54	92	30	82
	Female	2,497	756	372	409	164	188	314	162	132
	Total	3,436	1,054	518	568	242	242	406	192	214
All ages	Male	11,187	6,584	2,016	1,382	362	243	277	89	234
	Female	13,799	6,769	3,049	2,167	468	375	484	237	250
	Total	24,986	13,353	5,065	3,549	830	618	761	326	484

1980

Age groups (years)		Total	Under 4 weeks	4 weeks and under 8 weeks	8 weeks and under 26 weeks	26 weeks and under 1 year	1 year and under 2 years	2 years and under 5 years	5 years and under 10 years	10 years plus
0 to 14	Male	205	90	22	49	24	12	6	1	1
	Female	116	55	14	30	13	1	2	1	—
	Total	321	145	36	79	37	13	8	2	1
15 to 24	Male	1,132	701	182	187	33	21	6	2	—
	Female	1,155	704	205	184	42	14	5	—	1
	Total	2,287	1,405	387	371	75	35	11	2	1
25 to 44	Male	4,583	3,199	720	466	97	50	32	10	9
	Female	4,279	2,676	879	589	67	24	28	10	6
	Total	8,862	5,875	1,599	1,055	164	74	60	20	15
45 to 64	Male	3,599	2,156	700	409	72	73	76	37	76
	Female	4,264	2,035	1,185	758	102	61	53	29	41
	Total	7,863	4,191	1,885	1,167	174	134	129	66	117
65 to 74	Male	1,100	433	241	160	60	49	59	30	68
	Female	1,873	712	490	361	79	54	86	42	49
	Total	2,973	1,145	731	521	139	103	145	72	117
75 plus	Male	1,017	349	133	167	72	69	90	50	87
	Female	2,655	835	446	452	187	156	291	180	108
	Total	3,672	1,184	579	619	259	225	381	230	195
All ages	Male	11,636	6,928	1,998	1,438	358	274	269	130	241
	Female	14,342	7,017	3,219	2,374	490	310	465	262	205
	Total	25,978	13,945	5,217	3,812	848	584	734	392	446

1981

Age groups (years)		Total	Under 4 weeks	4 weeks and under 8 weeks	8 weeks and under 26 weeks	26 weeks and under 1 year	1 year and under 2 years	2 years and under 5 years	5 years and under 10 years	10 years plus
0 to 14	Male	234	117	25	52	31	7	2	—	—
	Female	145	76	19	40	8	2	—	—	—

Age groups (years)		Total	Under 4 weeks	4 weeks and under 8 weeks	8 weeks and under 26 weeks	26 weeks and under 1 year	1 year and under 2 years	2 years and under 5 years	5 years and under 10 years	10 years plus
	Total	379	193	44	92	39	9	2	—	—
15 to 24	Male	1,186	734	198	196	41	10	6	—	1
	Female	1,220	752	192	214	41	16	5	—	—
	Total	2,406	1,486	390	410	82	26	11	—	1
25 to 44	Male	4,593	3,134	757	509	68	53	42	22	8
	Female	4,349	2,693	920	598	65	38	16	14	5
	Total	8,942	5,827	1,677	1,107	133	91	58	36	13
45 to 64	Male	3,268	1,913	706	405	70	39	55	31	49
	Female	4,065	1,934	1,161	708	100	71	33	27	31
	Total	7,333	3,847	1,867	1,113	170	110	88	58	80
65 to 74	Male	1,175	464	274	196	39	50	59	27	66
	Female	1,903	714	502	388	83	60	81	33	42
	Total	3,078	1,178	776	584	122	110	140	60	108
75 plus	Male	1,149	366	177	196	91	97	98	34	90
	Female	2,855	947	444	471	201	179	307	202	104
	Total	4,004	1,313	621	667	292	276	405	236	194
All ages	Male	11,605	6,728	2,137	1,554	340	256	262	114	214
	Female	14,537	7,116	3,238	2,419	498	366	442	276	182
	Total	26,142	13,844	5,375	3,973	838	622	704	390	396

1982

Age groups (years)		Total	Under 4 weeks	4 weeks and under 8 weeks	8 weeks and under 26 weeks	26 weeks and under 1 year	1 year and under 2 years	2 years and under 5 years	5 years and under 10 years	10 years plus
0 to 14	Male	232	79	42	70	25	13	2	1	—
	Female	119	42	23	32	13	7	2	—	—
	Total	351	121	65	102	38	20	4	1	—
15 to 24	Male	1,049	666	178	152	36	16	1	—	—
	Female	1,092	649	195	189	40	14	5	—	—
	Total	2,141	1,315	373	341	76	30	6	—	—
25 to 44	Male	4,000	2,668	684	452	75	61	33	13	14
	Female	3,791	2,262	837	559	71	35	15	6	6
	Total	7,791	4,930	1,521	1,011	146	96	48	19	20
45 to 64	Male	2,982	1,733	610	354	91	49	40	36	69
	Female	3,756	1,760	1,053	693	108	54	35	29	24
	Total	6,738	3,493	1,663	1,047	199	103	75	65	93
65 to 74	Male	984	404	195	160	63	41	50	21	50
	Female	1,837	674	529	349	73	55	74	37	46
	Total	2,821	1,078	724	509	136	96	124	58	96
75 plus	Male	1,113	352	174	180	92	90	120	38	67

Age groups (years)		Total	Under 4 weeks	4 weeks and under 8 weeks	8 weeks and under 26 weeks	26 weeks and under 1 year	1 year and under 2 years	2 years and under 5 years	5 years and under 10 years	10 years plus
	Female	2,915	930	444	473	201	211	349	193	114
	Total	4,028	1,282	618	653	293	301	469	231	181
All ages	Male	10,360	5,902	1,883	1,368	382	270	246	109	200
	Female	13,510	6,317	3,081	2,295	506	376	480	265	190
	Total	23,870	12,219	4,964	3,663	888	646	726	374	390

1983

Age groups (years)		Total	Under 4 weeks	4 weeks and under 8 weeks	8 weeks and under 26 weeks	26 weeks and under 1 year	1 year and under 2 years	2 years and under 5 years	5 years and under 10 years	10 years plus
0 to 14	Male	181	58	34	60	20	7	2	—	—
	Female	114	46	20	33	8	6	1	—	—
	Total	295	104	54	93	28	13	3	—	—
15 to 24	Male	1,166	725	190	179	46	19	5	2	—
	Female	1,117	686	170	208	34	14	4	1	—
	Total	2,283	1,411	360	387	80	33	9	3	—
25 to 44	Male	4,289	2,931	725	435	77	53	33	24	11
	Female	4,069	2,567	844	520	61	46	14	6	11
	Total	8,358	5,498	1,569	955	138	99	47	30	22
45 to 64	Male	3,225	1,915	652	372	81	59	46	39	61
	Female	4,138	2,014	1,150	739	83	67	36	20	29
	Total	7,363	3,929	1,802	1,111	164	126	82	59	90
65 to 74	Male	1,121	515	206	168	44	46	57	27	58
	Female	1,899	724	497	406	87	54	58	26	47
	Total	3,020	1,239	703	574	131	100	115	53	105
75 plus	Male	1,341	506	200	206	96	110	103	38	82
	Female	3,401	1,310	501	494	211	249	335	190	111
	Total	4,742	1,816	701	700	307	359	438	228	193
All ages	Male	11,323	6,650	2,007	1,420	364	294	246	130	212
	Female	14,738	7,347	3,182	2,400	484	436	448	243	198
	Total	26,061	13,997	5,189	3,820	848	730	694	373	410

1984

Age groups (years)		Total	Under 4 weeks	4 weeks and under 8 weeks	8 weeks and under 26 weeks	26 weeks and under 1 year	1 year and under 2 years	2 years and under 5 years	5 years and under 10 years	10 years plus
0 to 14	Male	226	97	29	57	30	10	3	—	—
	Female	124	63	15	32	11	3	—	—	—
	Total	350	160	44	89	41	13	3	—	—
15 to 24	Male	1,321	898	173	195	42	10	3	—	—
	Female	1,149	709	204	196	30	7	3	—	—
	Total	2,470	1,607	377	391	72	17	6	—	—

Age groups (years)		Total	Under 4 weeks	4 weeks and under 8 weeks	8 weeks and under 26 weeks	26 weeks and under 1 year	1 year and under 2 years	2 years and under 5 years	5 years and under 10 years	10 years plus
25 to 44	Male	4,449	3,068	731	450	88	54	36	14	8
	Female	4,179	2,687	828	534	52	42	23	7	5
	Total	8,627	5,755	1,559	984	140	96	59	21	13
45 to 64	Male	3,254	2,008	611	389	71	41	46	40	48
	Female	3,920	1,907	1,083	706	78	57	42	21	26
	Total	7,174	3,915	1,694	1,095	149	98	88	61	74
65 to 74	Male	1,108	511	197	169	55	40	43	32	61
	Female	1,975	808	490	394	90	57	65	26	45
	Total	3,083	1,319	687	563	145	97	108	58	106
75 plus	Male	1,373	534	188	209	117	104	127	27	67
	Female	3,699	1,535	500	583	225	226	309	185	136
	Total	5,072	2,069	688	792	342	330	436	212	203
All ages	Male	11,731	7,116	1,929	1,469	403	259	258	113	184
	Female	15,045	7,709	3,120	2,445	486	392	442	239	212
	Total	26,776	14,825	5,049	3,914	889	651	700	352	396

Information for 1985 is not yet available.

Parole

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many long-term prisoners in Scotland have been eligible for parole under the 1984 revised guidelines; how many have chosen not to be considered; how many cases have been referred to the Parole Board for information only; and how many cases the Parole Board subsequently recommended for release following original rejection by the local review committee.

Mr. John MacKay: In 1984, the Parole Board for Scotland considered 55 cases of those serving sentences of over five years for crimes of violence or drug trafficking to which the new policy applied. Of this number, 37 cases were referred to the Board for information only and in 21 of these cases release had not been recommended by a local review committee. The board did not recommend release in any of the cases referred for information only and not recommended for release by a local review committee.

In 1984 out of a total of 819 inmates who were eligible for consideration for parole 100 opted out of the scheme. Separate figures for those who opted out, and were subject to the new parole policy, are not available.

Figures for cases considered for parole in 1985 are not yet available.

Life Sentences

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of individuals in Scotland sentenced to life imprisonment between 1965 and 1985, other than for the crime of murder; and for what crimes the sentence was imposed.

Mr. John MacKay: I regret that this information is not maintained in the form requested. I understand, however, that among persons currently in custody the crimes other than murder to which an indeterminate sentence was imposed between 1965 and 1985 include attempted murder (three cases), culpable homicide (five cases), robbery (one case), rape (one case), incest (one case) and wilful fire raising (one case).

Sentences (High Court)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of minimum recommended sentences imposed by the High Court in Scotland for each year from 1965 to 1985; and what recommendations were made.

Mr. John MacKay: I regret that this information is not maintained in the form requested. Accordingly, the available information which follows may not be comprehensive.

Number of minimum recommended sentences

	Number	Length
1965	1	15 years
1967	3	15 years (3 sentences)
1968	1	15 years
1969	4	12 years (4 sentences)
1970	2	20 years and 25 years
1971	1	17 years
1974	8	12 years, 15 years, 16 years, 18 years (3 sentences), 25 years (2 sentences)
1976	1	15 years
1977	4	15 years, 30 years and 'for the rest of his life' (2 sentences)
1978	5	15 years (4 sentences), indefinitely (1 sentence)
1979	1	15 years
1980	3	10 years and 12 years (2 sentences)
1981	3	8 years and 10 years (2 sentences)
1982	1	20 years
1983	4	10 years, 12 years, 15 years and 20 years
1985	4	15 years, 20 years (2 sentences) and 30 years

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the cumulative reduction in rate support grant since 1978-79 in Scotland at 1986-87 prices, showing figures for each of the years 1979-80 to 1986-87.

Mr. Rifkind: The figures below show for each year the difference between rate support grant in 1978-79 and rate support grant in the year in question on a constant price basis. The GDP deflator is used to convert from cash to constant prices. The rate support grant figures are those in the report on the latest Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order for the year in question.

	£ million
1978-79 to 1979-80	36
1978-79 to 1980-81	−9
1978-79 to 1981-82	98
1978-79 to 1982-83	80
1978-79 to 1983-84	66
1978-79 to 1984-85	195
1978-79 to 1985-86	349
1978-79 to 1986-87	272

Travelling People (Sites)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any grants are payable by him to persons and bodies other than local authorities in connection with the provision of sites for travelling people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Provision of sites for travelling people is a local authority responsibility. I have no power to provide financial assistance specifically towards the costs of providing such sites to any other person or body.

The Government recently announced a target date of December 1988 for completion of a network of sites sufficient to meet the needs of Scotland's travelling community. I am convinced that this is the right policy to secure satisfactory provision for travellers and to remove for the settled community the nuisance of unauthorised encampments.

Standard Grade Courses (Assessment)

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has received the report of the sub-group of the joint working parties' steering committee which was set up last September to review assessment in standard grade courses.

Mr. Rifkind: The sub-group's report has been presented to me after the approval of the joint working parties steering committee. The report confirms the Government's belief that standard grade can without fundamental change lead to more relevant and effective teaching for all pupils.

The report clarifies the role to be played by teachers in assessment of standard grade courses and advises that for the most part internal assessment in day-to-day teaching may be carried out informally, using professional judgment and familiar techniques. As far as assessment for certification is concerned, the report recommends useful simplification of the present arrangements while leaving their basic structure intact, in accordance with the sub-group's remit which, inter alia, required it to have regard to the fundamental principles which underlie standard grade assessment.

I congratulate the sub-group on its work. Subject to the outcome of consultations, I am sure that its proposals when implemented will lead to a substantial easing of the burden which many teachers have feared will arise from the standard grade assessment arrangements.

I have today placed copies of the report, and a leaflet summarising its arguments and conclusions, in the Libraries of both Houses. I have also authorised its circulation for consultation to a wide range of bodies representing educational interests and users of the Scottish Certificate of Education. Comments have been invited by 31 July 1986 and the Government hope that the report's recommendations will be implemented in time for the 1988 diet of examinations.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has decided the amount of fee remission grant to allocate to schools participating in the assisted places scheme in respect of session 1986-87.

Mr. Rifkind: The allocations of fee remission grant for 1986-87 are shown in the table. Forty-one schools will participate, one fewer than in 1985-86 because of the proposed closure of St Margaret's convent school, Edinburgh.

Allocation

School	*£*
Dollar Academy	79,000
Kilquhanity House	28,000
St. Leonard's	44,000
Albyn School for Girls	15,000
Robert Gordon's College	67,000
Gordonstoun	69,000
St. Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen	17,000
Fort Augustus Abbey	100,000
Merchant Company Schools	920,000
Edinburgh Academy	86,000
Fettes	78,000
George Heriot's	335,000
Loretto	66,000
Merchiston Castle	140,000
Rudolf Steiner	85,000
St. Denis and Cranley	35,000
St. George's	26,000
St. Margaret's (Edinburgh)	92,000
Belmont House	20,000
Craigholme	32,000
Fernhill	50,000
Glasgow Academy	68,000
High School of Glasgow	88,000
Hutchesons' Grammar	173,000
Keil	103,000
Kelvinside Academy	90,000
West of Scotland School Company	405,000
Lomond	72,000
St. Aloysius' College	173,000
Wellington	59,000
Kilgraston (Convent of the Sacred Heart)	73,000
High School of Dundee	246,000
Morrison's Academy	225,000
Rannoch	58,000
Strathallan	99,000
Glenalmond College	114,000
Total	4,430,000

ENERGY

Renewable Energy Sources

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Energy what initiatives the Government are undertaking and what research they are sponsoring into renewable sources of energy supply.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government have identified the most promising renewable energy technologies for exploitation in the United Kingdom, and substantial support is being given to their development through my Department's research, development and demonstration programmes. A detailed account of the content of these programmes and the prospects for the exploitation of renewable energy sources in the United Kingdom, is given in ETSU publications R28, R30 and N3/85. Copies of these documents are in the Libraries of both Houses. The Government seek international collaboration in this area whenever it is of benefit to the United Kingdom.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he has made any estimates of the potential savings to the United Kingdom's energy bill which will be gained during Energy Efficiency Year in each region of the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will list the total proposed savings during Energy Efficiency Year by sector; and, in each case, what these savings represent as a percentage of *(a)* total savings in the United Kingdom and *(b)* the United Kingdom's annual energy bill.

Mr. David Hunt: Energy Efficiency Year is part of a continuing campaign by Government to persuade the nation to save the £7 billion it wastes each year by using energy inefficiently. Savings stimulated by the campaign will accrue over different timescales, depending on the measures undertaken. I regret that there is no satisfactory regional breakdown of total energy consumption. The sectoral breakdown of the nation's energy bill is as follows:

Energy consumption by sector-£ million

	1984
Domestic	9,620
Industry, commerce and public services	11,980
Transport	15,040

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what percentage of imported spent oxide fuel has been kept in the United Kingdom without having been reprocessed since 1979;

(2) what has been the tonnage of spent oxide fuel imported from overseas since 1979.

Mr. Goodlad: From 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1985 approximately, 1,230 teu of spent oxide fuel was imported from overseas. Of this about 14 tonnes were temporarily held in the United Kingdom while in transit to other countries. The balance is stored at Sellafield pending reprocessing in the thermal oxide reprocessing plant which is presently under construction.

Since 1976 BNFL's contracts for the reprocessing of overseas spent fuel have contained options for the return of wastes. As I said in my answer to the hon. Member on 2 May at columns 502-503, the Government intend that the options should be exercised and that the wastes should be returned.

Nuclear Power Industry

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what benefits he expects to follow for Britain's nuclear industry from his recent visit to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is too early to say what benefits might flow from my visit, but I noted strong interest in British expertise in the handling and reprocessing of nuclear waste. Any trade in nuclear materials and technology will, of course, be subject to our international obligations in this area.

PRIME MINISTER

Japan (Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent visit to Japan.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend hopes to make a statement to the House about the economic summit in Tokyo.

United States Aircraft (Military Operations)

Mr. Onslow asked the Prime Minister whether there are any circumstances in which United States aircraft based in the United Kingdom can be used in military operations without the consent of Her Majesty's Government; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to the answer*, 6 May 1986, c. *3*].: Under the Churchill—Truman arrangements, there are no circumstances in which American aircraft based in this country may be used without our consent in military operations planned by the United States.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Building Societies Bill

Mr. Cash asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had on the Building Societies Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government have received a number of further representations from societies and others, particularly concerning conversion to company status, obstructed mergers and the provision of pensions.

Conversion to Company Status

The transfer of a society's business to a company will be subject to certain minimum statutory requirements and to confirmation by the Building Societies Commission that the requisite procedures have been complied with. These requirements will ensure that the rights of members are fully safeguarded on conversion, that it is only undertaken with the active participation and support of members, and that the process will not cause unacceptable discontinuity in the institution concerned.

Transfer of its business to a new company created by the society for the purpose will require the approval of a special resolution on which 20 per cent. of eligible members had voted.

The interests of former members of the society will be protected by a right to a priority distribution in the event of liquidation of the new company, reflecting their notional interest in the reserves of the society, to the extent that they had retained a corresponding deposit in the company. Members of the society of at least two years' standing may be entitled to priority in any share issue and to a bonus issue after a further two years. Only in the case of members ineligible to vote on the proposal, by virtue of the small value of their shares or for other reasons, could cash distributions be made reflecting their notional interest in the reserves.

Individual shareholdings in the new company will be limited to 15 per cent. of the total for the first five years. The only exception to this would be for a transfer to an existing company, where the restrictions on cash distributions and the ownership of shares would not apply. But transfer to an existing company would need to be approved by 50 per cent. of members eligible to vote on the special resolution, or by the holders of 90 per cent. of the shares.

Mergers

After further consideration of the representations received on the proposals in part II of schedule 13 to the Bill, under which the board of one society may circulate proposals for a merger to the members of another without the agreement of its board, I have decided to substitute simplified provisions. These would require a society to include in the notice of annual general meetings, or special meetings convened to consider merger proposals, a statement of any merger approach received from another society, unless it had expressly requested that the fact of the approach be kept confidential. Whether to take the matter forward from that point would be for the members using the normal procedures available to them under the rules of the society and the constitutional arrangements provided in the Bill. Detailed amendments are being tabled today.

Provision of pensions

I have also considered further, in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, the terms on which building societies should be able to make arrangements for the provision of pensions. I have concluded that building societies should be given a power to invest in a subsidiary or associated company established for the sole purpose of making provision for pensions on a money purchase basis. The subsidiary or associate would need to operate as a unit trust authorised under the financial services legislation.

Financial Services Bill

Mr. Cash asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the provisions of the Financial Services Bill will affect the Bank of England's surveillance of the wholesale money and foreign exchange markets.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government have been considering the arrangements for supervision of the wholesale money, foreign exchange and gold bullion markets. These markets have by tradition generally been overseen and supervised by the Bank of England, on a non-statutory basis. The main participants are recognised banks and deposit-taking institutions, building societies, and specialised brokers and dealers.

Certain transactions in these wholesale markets, such as dealings with brokers in certificates of deposit and dealings in currency and gold options and futures, fall within the scope of the Financial Services Bill as at present drafted. Others, such as dealings in commercial bills, and normal spot and forward currency transactions, are excluded. We have concluded that the supervision of each of these wholesale markets should in future be the responsibility of the Bank of England. This supervision will continue to be on a non-statutory basis. The Government will be issuing a consultative document later this year seeking views on the arrangements for future regulations of these markets.

To reduce supervisory overlap, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will be bringing forward amendments to the Financial Services Bill which will exclude from the definition of carrying on investment business wholesale transactions in these markets if at least one party to the transaction is a recognised bank, licensed deposit taker, building society or an institution on a list to be drawn up by the Bank of England. The bank's criteria for inclusion on such lists and its arrangements for maintaining them will be subject to the approval of the Treasury. The Department of Trade and Industry will be consulting on detailed amendments. A copy of its letter to interested parties is being placed in the Library of the House.

Value Added Tax

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage increase in value added tax thresholds for every year since 1973; what was the percentage annual increase in the rate of inflation for each year since 1973; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The percentage increases in the value added tax registration threshold have been as follows:

Date of Change	*Increase in the threshold (per cent.)*
1 October 1977	50·0
12 April 1978	33·3
27 March 1980	35·0
11 March 1981	11·1
10 March 1982	13·3
16 March 1983	5·9
14 March 1984	3·9
20 March 1985	4·3
19 March 1986	5·1

The cumulative rate of inflation between April 1973 and December 1985 is 311 per cent. The threshold, increases in which are conventionally rounded to the nearest £100, has risen by 310 per cent. in the same period (from £5,000 in 1973 to £20,500 in the March 1986 Budget). Under the EC sixth VAT directive member states are permitted to increase their threshold by no more than the rate of inflation.

Inflation is normally measured on a 12-months basis, but since April 1973 there have been technical adjustments to the basis of calculation for VAT threshold purposes in

order to arrive at the present December-December year-on-year RPI comparison and it is not therefore particularly meaningful to disaggregate the inflation figure to individual years. I shall, however, write to my hon. Friend with further information.

Mr. Buchan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what value added tax was due, deductible, and payable, or repayable, in each financial year for which figures are available since 1973-74, in the United Kingdom, on *(a)* all cultural events, *(b)* artists and authors, and so on, *(c)* cinemas, *(d)* theatres, music halls, radio and television services, films and recording studios, and so on, *(e)* public libraries, museums and galleries and *(f)* performers and performing groups.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986]: It is not clear what the hon. Member means by "all cultural events". The information available in respect of the other categories he has mentioned is as follows:

Year	*Tax due*	*£ million Tax deductible*	*Net tax payable/ repayable*
Artists, authors etc.			
1976-77	9·8	4·8	5·0
1977-78	12·1	5·5	6·6
1978-79	14·1	6·1	8·0
1979-80	27·2	11·7	15·5
1980-81	39·8	17·8	22·0
1981-82	43·5	19·9	23·6
1982-83	59·2	27·2	32·0
1983-84	68·6	31·1	37·5
1984-85	85·1	38·3	46·8
Public libraries, museums and galleries			
1974-75	0·2	0·4	−0·2
1975-76	0·3	0·5	−0·2
1976-77	0·5	0·6	−0·1
1977-78	0·6	0·7	−0·1
1978-79	0·6	0·8	−0·2
1979-80	1·2	1·6	−0·4
1980-81	2·0	2·6	−0·6
1981-82	2·2	2·9	−0·7
1982-83	2·5	3·1	−0·6
1983-84	3·1	3·4	−0·3
1984-85	3·9	4·3	−0·4
Performers and performing groups			
1974-75	5·3	2·1	3·2
1975-76	6·3	2·6	3·7
1976-77	7·8	3·5	4·3
1977-78	9·2	4·2	5·0
1978-79	9·1	4·5	4·6
1979-80	18·2	8·3	9·9
1980-81	26·1	13·3	12·8
1981-82	27·0	12·9	14·1
1982-83	34·5	16·4	18·1
1983-84	37·0	16·8	20·2
1984-85	43·2	20·7	22·5
Cinemas			
1974-75	3·3	1·6	1·7
1975-76	4·1	2·2	1·9
1976-77	4·4	2·4	2·0
1977-78	5·7	2·9	2·8
1978-79	6·7	3·7	3·0
1979-80	13·6	7·3	6·3
1980-81	13·3	8·1	5·2
1981-82	15·2	9·2	6·0
1982-83	13·4	7·4	6·0
1983-84	11·4	6·5	4·9
1984-85	9·9	7·4	2·5
Theatres, music halls etc.; radio and television services, films and recording studios etc.			
1974-75	28·9	19·9	9·0
1975-76	31·5	22·0	9·5
1976-77	39·1	26·7	12·4
1977-78	49·5	32·8	16·7
1978-79	53·2	37·4	15·8
1979-80	96·8	72·2	24·6
1980-81	151·7	109·9	41·8
1981-82	182·8	136·7	46·1
1982-83	245·5	185·3	60·2
1983-84	271·8	215·4	56·4
1984-85	309·4	249·1	60·3

In so far as the tax deductible figures for 1984-85 may contain import value added tax that cannot be separately identified, the net tax figures for that year may be distorted.

VAT Registration Applications

Mr. Cartwright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many applications for value added tax registration were outstanding at the Orpington value added tax office at the most recent convenient date;

(2) what steps he is taking to reduce the backlog of value added tax registration applications at the Orpington value added tax office;

(3) what is the current delay in obtaining a value added tax regisration number from the Orpington value added tax office.

Mr. Brooke: As at 1 April 1986 Orpington local VAT office had 192 applications for VAT registration in the course of processing. This represents a reduction of more than 100 when compared with the position 12 months earlier. Customs and Excise will continue to look for further improvement and to provide the best service possible consistent with the safeguarding of the revenue. under normal circumstances a VAT registration number is issued by the Orpington office between three and 10 days after the application is received.

Agricultural Buildings (Writing-off Allowances)

Mr. Lyell asked thee Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the cost to the Exchequer of permitting glasshouses and other specialised agricultural buildings to be written off at 25 per cent. per annum reducing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Expenditure on some very specialised agricultural buildings already qualifies for 25 per cent. writing down allowances. If this allowance was extended to expenditure on all glasshouses and agricultural buildings at present attracting the 4 per cent. allowance, we tentatively estimate the cost in the first full year as £30 million, rising to some £100 million in the early 1990s.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Dubs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of revenue from North sea oil taxation in the current financial year.

Mr. Moore: I refer the hon. Member to table 1.2 of the 1986-87 financial statement and Budget report.

EC Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1972 the appropriation for the European Economic Community budget and the amount of any supplementary budgets for *(a)* agriculture, *(b)* other purposes and *(c)* the amount actually spent; and if he will provide the estimate for the current year and the forecast for 1987.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986]: Details of the appropriations for the European Economic Community budgets since 1972 are given in the official journal of the European Communities, "Annual Report by the Court of Auditors". The copies covering the period 1973 to 1984 are in the Library of the House. The figures for the 1985 and 1986 budgets are as follows, along with the amounts likely to be proposed by the Commission in the draft supplementary budget for this year. Details of the amount actually spent in 1985 have not yet been published by the Commission. The preliminary draft budget for 1987 has not yet been submitted to the Council.

Community expenditure in 1985 and 1986

mecu

	Agriculture	*Other expenditure*
1985	19,955	8,478
1986*	21,012	11,674
1986†	915	895

Source: Official Journal of the European Communities—general budgets for 1985 and 1986.

* 1986 main budget. Excludes the elements added by the European Parliament to the Council's second reading budget.

† 1986 draft supplementary budget. Details contained in Commission press release of 30 April.

EC (Agricultural Expenditure)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate *(a)* overall and *(b)* agricultural spending by the European Economic Community in 1986; what were the limits on spending set in 1985; what are the implications for the budgetary discipline framework agreed at Fontainebleau; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986]: Total Community expenditure in the 1986 budget, as agreed at the Council's second reading, amounts to some 32,686 mecu. Within this, provision was made for agricultural guarantee spending of 21,012 mecu, comprising 20,445 mecu for agricultural market support in the Community of Ten (some 170 mecu below the agricultural guideline set in 1985 for the Community of Ten) plus 567 mecu for Spain and Portugal. The Commission has announced its intention of presenting a supplementary and amending budget which, if adopted, would increase total spending by 1,810 mecu to 34,496 mecu. This would include an increase in agricultural spending of 915 mecu in 1986, which would involve exceeding the guideline limit by some 745 mecu. When the Commission formally presents its proposals for additional spending, the United Kingdom will consider them carefully, taking into account the implications of the Council's conclusions on budget discipline and the particular circumstances of the current year.

National Insurance

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on Exchequer revenues of removing the half tax relief from class 4 national insurance contributions.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986]: The latest available estimate of the cost of the relief (£55 million for 1985-86) was published in table 2.24 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89" (Cmnd. 9702).

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the value of tax relief for private hospital or nursing home developments under the business expansion scheme.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 April 1986, c. *38*]: Investments in private hospitals and nursing homes under the business expansion scheme totalled about £4 million in 1983-84. Information about 1984-85 investments is not yet complete, but of the £136 million investments for which information is available centrally about £17 million were in respect of private hospitals and nursing homes. At an average level of relief of 50 per cent. this represents about £2 million revenue costs in 1983-84 and about £8·5 million revenue cost in 1984-85. It is too soon to provide an estimate of 1985-86 investments.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Corrie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the population pay tax who have an income of up to £15,000 in 1985-86; and what was the percentage in 1978-79.

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what percentage of the population with an income of up to £15,000 will pay income tax as a result of the 1986 Budget; and what percentage paid tax on the same figure in real terms in 1978-79;

(2) what percentage of the population paid income tax with an income of up to £15,000 in 1978-79; and what percentage pay tax on the same figure in real terms now.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 April 1986, c. *38*]: Estimates are shown. For each pair of income ranges the levels of income are the same in real terms, using the RPI. The analysis is in terms of tax units, that is counting married couples as one and combining their incomes. The bases for the percentages are the numbers of adult single people and married couples with incomes for income tax purposes below the specified levels in the respective years.

Year	*Incomes up to:* £	*Per cent. paying tax*
(i)		
1978-79	8,010	72
1985-86	15,000	62
(ii)		
1978-79	7,740	71
1986-87	15,000	61
(iii)		
1978-79	15,000	74
1986-87	29,080	65

Income Tax

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the percentage share of tax paid by the top 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 per cent. of income earners for each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 May 1986, c. *530-31*]: The available information is as follows. The analysis is of single people and married couples paying income tax in each year. The quantiles are determined by reference to tax liability. The figures are based on the surveys of personal incomes for years up to 1983-84. For subsequent years, they are based on projections from the 1983-84 survey and are therefore provisional.

Quantile shares of Income Tax

Per cent.

*Quantile group of tax units**	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Top 1 per cent.	11·2	10·4	10·9	11·3	11·7	11·1	11·8	12·0
Top 2 per cent.	15·4	14·7	15·4	15·8	16·4	15·6	16·5	17·0
Top 3 per cent.	18·8	18·0	18·9	19·3	19·9	19·3	20·3	20·7
Top 4 per cent.	21·6	20·8	21·6	23·4	22·8	22·4	23·5	23·9
Top 5 per cent.	24·0	23·4	24·4	24·8	25·4	25·0	26·1	26·7

* i.e. counting married couples as one and combining their incomes.

DEFENCE

American Forces

92. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to discuss the rules of engagement for American forces stationed in Britain with the American Government.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so.

Royal Ordnance plc

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to meet the directors of Royal Ordnance plc.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement have regular meetings with the chairman and chief executive of royal Ordnance plc and with other directors as necessary.

Departmental Property

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the sale of surplus land owned by his Department.

Mr. Lee: It is the policy of the Ministry of Defence to pass land and buildings which are no longer required for defence purposes to the PSA for disposal. Since 1979 the estate has been reduced by almost 28,000 acres.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence what bids have been received from developers for the purchase of properties owned by his Department in Kent.

Mr. Lee: In recent months no bids have been received, but two speculative inquiries have been made on behalf of clients seeking development land in Kent.

Defence Sales Organisation

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed by the Defence Sales Organisation; and what proportion travel abroad in a representational capacity.

Mr. Lee: The Defence Export Services Organisation —previously called the Defence Sales Organisation— currently employs some 260 staff including service personnel. Approximately 30 per cent. of these travelled abroad on business in 1985.

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the countries which his Defence Sales Organisation has visited during 1985; and what were the total sales achieved during the year.

Mr. Lee: The countries visited on business by staff of the Defence Export Services Organisation during 1985 were as follows:

Algeria
Bahrain
Belgium
Brazil
Brunei
Cameroon
China
Cyprus
Ecuador
Egypt
Finland
France
Federal Republic of Germany
Gabon
Greece
Hong Kong
India
Indonesia
Italy
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Kuwait
Malaysia
Netherlands
Oman
Pakistan
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Singapore
Spain
South Korea
Sweden
Switzerland
Thailand
Turkey
United Arab Emirate
United States of America
Venezuela
Yugoslavia
Zimbabwe

The total value of receipts from exports of identified defence equipment in 1985 was £813 million.

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if it is customary for the Defence Sales Organisation to inform the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation of its contracts and supply arrangements.

Mr. Lee: No.

Royal Navy Establishments, Wales

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilians are employed in each Royal Navy establishment in Wales.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is provided in the following table:

Civilian strengths in Royal Navy establishments in Wales as at 1 April 1986

Establishment	*Non-Industrials*	*Industrials*	*Total*
HMS Cambria (RNR)	2	14·0	16·0
Llanelli (NDSMO)	1	8·0	9·0
Llangennech (RNSD/NDSMO)	142	191·5	333·5
Milford Haven (RNAD/NDSMO)	78	177·0	255·0
Pembroke Dock (DMS/NDSMO)	38	127·5	165·5
Swansea (RNR)	—	0·5	0·5
Trecwn (RNAD/NDSMO)	116	325·5	441·5
	377	844	1221

RNR—Royal Naval Reserve
NDSMO—Navy Department Shore Machinery Office
RNSD—Royal Naval Stores Depot
RNAD—Royal Naval Armament Depot

ENVIRONMENT

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with current methods of nuclear waste disposal at Drigg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Current methods of disposal at Drigg do not represent any unacceptable risks to those who work there or to those who live nearby. Nevertheless, improvements can be and are being made.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what exploratory work on potential low level, intermediate level and high level nuclear waste sites have been carried out since 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave: Research was carried out on behalf of the Department at Altnabreac in Scotland and in Cornwall to develop procedures to investigate sites for the disposal of high level waste. No exploratory field work has been done on potential sites for low-level or intermediate-level radioactive waste since 1979, except for one soil sample taken at the Elstow site.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what measures will be taken to monitor radiation exposure in local populations and water supplies at the chosen site for a nuclear dump;

(2) what measures will be taken to monitor radiation activity at a nuclear waste dump over a 10-year period once it is operational.

Mr. Waldegrave: Radioactive waste disposal sites operated by NIREX will be licensed by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and all waste disposals authorised by my Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It will be a condition of the authorisation that the site operator carries out a programme of environmental monitoring agreed with the authorising Departments. This must be comprehensive and will include the monitoring of air, surface water, ground water, and foodstuffs in the surrounding area.

In addition to the monitoring by the site operator, the regulatory authorities will carry out their own checks.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any efforts have been made by his Department to assess the longer term effects of low level radiation on local populations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department of the Environment commissions research on the techniques and safety of radioactive waste disposal. Research into the long-term health effects of low level ionising radiation is commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Security. The Committee on the Medical Effects of Radiation in the Environment provides expert advice on this matter.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many metres deep nuclear waste will be buried at the chosen site.

Mr. Waldegrave: This is a matter that will be addressed by the United Kingdom Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive Ltd. following a detailed programme of on-site investigations and safety assessments. The sites identified by NIREX offer the potential for a variety of engineering solutions in terms of depth of burial.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what criteria low level and intermediate level nuclear waste are to be segregated for dumping.

Mr. Waldegrave: Definitions of low-level and intermediate level radioactive waste are set out in the fifth annual report of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee. Any authorisation for disposal of waste will take account of the characteristics of the disposal site and facility such that the "Principles for the Protection of the Human Environment," (HMSO, December 1984) are respected.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many studies have been carried out by his Department since 1979 on the behaviour of radionuclides released from sites of nuclear waste disposal.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department is conducting an extensive programme of research on the physical and chemical processes which could have a bearing on the migration of radionuclides from a nuclear waste disposal site on land. Summaries of this research are given in the annual progress reports prepared by my Department's radioactive waste division and published by HMSO. About 150 research contracts for such studies have been completed since 1979.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if any improvements are to be made to

emergency procedures to be followed in the event of a leak of radioactivity during burial of nuclear low level or intermediate waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Disposals of radioactive wastes from nuclear and other sources are made at the Drigg site operated by British Nuclear Fuels plc. Details are published annually in the BNFL annual reports. There is no requirement for the radioactive waste to be contained within waste packages at Drigg, and therefore there can be no question of a leak of radioactivity during the process of burial.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies have been conducted by his Department into the conditioning and containment of intermediate waste since 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department has commissioned a substantial research programme on the generic options for the conditioning and management of intermediate level waste. Abstracts of these studies are published annually in the progress reports on "Sponsored Research on Radioactive Waste Management" which are available from the Department's sub-library at South Ruislip.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he has used to judge the adequacy of NIREX's engineered containment philosophy for shallow repositories of nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department will need to be satisfied that any proposals made by UK NIREX Ltd. for shallow repositories comply with the requirements set out in "Principles for the Protection of the Human Environment" published by HMSO, December 1984.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what current measures his Department is taking to alleviate the radioactive contamination which has occurred in the Irish Sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to a question from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 30 April, at columns 413-14.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the extent to which any future dumping site in the United Kingdom will be engineered on a basis similar to existing sites in the United States of America.

Mr. Waldegrave: Various designs for radioactive waste disposal facilities have been investigated in the United States of America and several different types are in use. The experience they have gained will be taken into account when my Department assesses specific proposals made by UK NIREX Ltd. Some of the options currently under investigation in the United Kingdom are described in the executive's publications.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence his Department has that proves burial of nuclear waste is technologically safe.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department sponsors a considerable programme of independent research to assess the safety of waste disposal technology. The results of these studies indicate that the risks to the public, using the methods proposed will be less than the targets set by the authorising Departments as specified in "Principles for the Protection of the Human Environment" HMSO December 1984.

Derelict Land

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much derelict land has been reclaimed by regional area in England for each year from 1975 to 1985; how much funding was available for each year; and if, in any year, it was underspent;

(2) how much derelict land has been reclaimed by county area in England for each year from 1975 to 1985; how much funding was available for each year; and if, in any year, it was underspent.

Sir George Young: Details of the amount of derelict land reclaimed by county and regional area in England in each financial year for the period 1 April 1974 to 31 March 1982 are given in the "Survey of Derelict Land in England 1982", a copy of which is available in the Library. The amount of derelict land reclaimed in each financial year with the aid of derelict land grant by region for the period 1 April 1982 to 31 March 1985 is shown on a comparable basis:

Derelict Land in England
Total area of derelict land reclamation schemes completed with the aid of derelict land grant

hectares

DOE Administrative Region	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Northern	279	75	391
North West*	526	426	524
Yorkshire and Humberside	82	82	97
West Midlands	235	362	153
East Midlands	131	207	50
South West	97	68	38
Greater London	37	10	47
South East	30	31	11
Eastern†	3	10	5
Total	1,420	1,271	1,316

Notes:
* Includes Cumbria and Merseyside.
† Includes Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Essex. For the purposes of the 1982 survey of derelict land in England these counties were included in the south-east region.

Information on derelict land reclaimed by county area for the period subsequent to the 1982 survey of derelict land is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The resources made available under the derelict land grant scheme, for the reclamation of derelict land in England for each financial year for the period 1 April 1974 to 31 March 1985 are as follows, together with the expenditure outturn and the under/overspend.

£ million

	Resource Allocation	*Expenditure Outturn*	*Under/ Overspend −/+*
1974-75	12·0	8·3	−3·7
1975-76	13·6	10·7	−2·9
1976-77	16·3	10·0	−6·3
1977-78	15·6	13·4	−2·2
1978-79	21·2	20·7	−0·5
1979-80	23·5	22·4	−1·1
1980-81	29·6	30·0	+0·4
1981-82	37·5	29·7	−7·8
1982-83	76·5	61·1	−15·4
1983-84	74·8	68·2	−6·6
1984-85	75·0	69·9	−5·1
1985-86	81·8	*79·8	*−2·0

* Estimated.

Marina, Bourne End, Hertfordshire

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date appeal App/M1900/C/85/2951 was lodged against Dacorum borough council's decision not to grant planning permission for a marina at Bourne End, Hertfordshire; and if he will make a statement on the arrangements for the public inquiry.

Mr. Tracey: Two planning appeals by Sunjoy Ltd., in respect of the refusal by Dacorum borough council to grant planning permission for a mooring basin and related development at Pix Farm Lane, Bourne End, Hertfordshire, were received on 12 November 1985. The appeal numbers are APP/A1910/A/8540450 and 42262. A public local inquiry will be held by a planning inspector on 19 August at the Civic Centre, Hemel Hempstead, commencing at 10 am.

Appeal numbers APP/M1900/C/85/2951 relates to an appeal against an enforcement notice issued by Hertfordshire county council in respect of an alleged breach of planning control by the tipping of hardcore and rubble at Sharpes Lane, Hemel Hempstead. This appeal is proceeding separately and, as the parties have agreed to the written representations procedure, there will be no public local inquiry.

Wates Houses (Reinstatement Systems)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the reasons for the delay in the issue of licences for reinstatement systems relating to Wates dwellings by PRC Homes Ltd.

Sir George Young: PRC Homes Ltd. has to appraise carefully any proposed repair systems put to it and can license a repair method only when that process has been completed satisfactorily. One method for reinstating Wates houses is currently being appraised and that should be completed in the next few weeks. Another method is expected to be resubmitted shortly and then sent for appraisal. I cannot of course prejudge the outcome of those appraisals and, in particular, whether licenses will be granted.

Kenwood House

Mr. Foot asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many members of staff at Kenwood House have retired or taken redundancy as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council;

(2) how many times rooms at Kenwood House, Hampstead, have been closed to the public since English Heritage took control of the property following the abolition of the Greater London council on 1 April;

(3) on how many occasions Kenwood House has been closed before the official time of 7 pm since 1 April;

(4) if it is the Government's policy to reduce staff at English Heritage properties;

(5) what has happened to the Government funding of £2 million made available to English Heritage to deal with the problems facing Kenwood House, Ranger's House, Blackheath and Marble Hill House, Twickenham, following abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: An extra £7·75 million was allocated in the commission's grant-in-aid for 1986-87 for all the functions of the GLC transferred to it under the Local Government Act 1985. This figure was agreed with the commission and derived from an estimate of the GLC's cost of these functions.

The commission indicated by letter to the GLC staff members working at, or in connection with, Kenwood House, Marble Hill House and Ranger's House that they were prepared to make job offers to all of them. Eight of these staff (four of whom were connected with Kenwood House) indicated that they did not wish to receive a job offer because they intended either to take redundancy compensation or to retire early. One staff member (also Kenwood House) to whom a job offer was made did not accept.

Detailed questions of opening hours and custodial arrangements are a matter for the commission.

Dampness (Dwellings)

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available to the relevant local authorities special funds for the elimination of damp from no-fines dwellings; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Local authorities' needs for expenditure of this nature are taken into account, within the overall resources available, when setting their housing investment programme allocations.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the amount of block grant to be recycled; and how much each authority will receive.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The total estimated grant underclaim is now about £628 million. This would be distributed to local authorities at first supplementary report as illustrated in the table. Their actual grant entitlements will depend on a number of factors, not least their latest budget decisions.

On this basis I do not expect my guarantee of £500 million to be called upon.

Effect on grant entitlements of the guaranteed £500 million recycling and the effect of £628 million recycling

	Guaranteed extra grant from recycling of £500 million (£ million)	*Estimated extra grant from recycling of £628 million (£ million)*
Greater London		
City of London	—	—
Camden	—	—
Greenwich	0·579	0·725
Hackney	0·705	0·884

	Guaranteed extra grant from recycling of £500 million (£ million)	*Estimated extra grant from recycling of £628 million (£ million)*
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·876	1·097
Islington	1·004	1·257
Kensington and Chelsea	1·969	2·467
Lambeth	1·160	1·454
Lewisham	0·739	0·926
Southwark	1·123	1·407
Tower Hamlets	0·573	0·718
Wandsworth	1·115	1·397
Westminster	—	—
Barking and Dagenham	1·328	1·664
Barnet	3·119	3·907
Bexley	1·605	2·010
Brent	2·605	3·264
Bromley	2·546	3·189
Croydon	3·687	4·620
Ealing	2·934	3·676
Enfield	2·377	2·978
Haringey	1·630	2·042
Harrow	1·798	2·253
Havering	1·906	2·388
Hillingdon	—	3·684
Hounslow*	2·771	1·683
Kingston-upon-Thames	1·463	1·832
Merton	1·541	1·931
Newham	1·837	2·302
Redbridge	1·837	2·301
Richmond-upon-Thames	1·610	2·018
Sutton	1·539	1·928
Waltham Forest	1·430	1·791
ILEA	—	—
London Fire and Civil Defence Authority	—	—
Metropolitan Police	9·836	12·323
Greater Manchester		
Bolton	2·111	2·645
Bury	1·409	1·765
Manchester	5·352	6·705
Oldham	1·747	2·189
Rochdale	1·514	1·897
Salford	2·301	2·883
Stockport	2·897	3·629
Tameside	1·673	2·096
Trafford	2·815	3·527
Wigan	2·318	2·905
Greater Manchester Police Authority	1·454	1·821
Greater Manchester Fire and Civil Defence Authority	0·681	0·854
Greater Manchester Transport Authority	1·292	1·619
Merseyside		
Knowsley	1·409	1·765
Liverpool	4·693	5·879
St. Helens	1·562	1·957
Sefton	2·441	3·058
Wirral	2·930	3·670
Merseyside Police Authority	0·840	1·052
Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority	0·397	0·498
Merseyside Transport Authority	—	—
South Yorkshire		
Barnsley	1·313	1·645
Doncaster	2·004	2·510
Rotherham	1·614	2·022
Sheffield	4·449	5·574
South Yorkshire Police Authority	0·616	0·769
South Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority	0·277	0·347
South Yorkshire Transport Authority	—	—
Tyne and Wear		
Gateshead	1·482	1·857

	Guaranteed extra grant from recycling of £500 million (£ million)	*Estimated extra grant from recycling of £628 million (£ million)*
Newcastle upon Tyne	2·894	3·626
North Tyneside	1·466	1·837
South Tyneside	1·050	1·315
Sunderland	2·183	2·735
Northumbria Police Authority	0·719	0·900
Tyne and Wear Fire & Civil Defence Authority	0·267	0·335
Tyne and Wear Transport Authority	0·503	0·630
West Midlands		
Birmingham	13·506	16·921
Coventry	3·195	4·003
Dudley	3·290	4·121
Sandwell	3·549	4·446
Solihull	2·209	2·767
Walsall	2·788	3·492
Wolverhampton	3·125	3·916
West Midlands Police Authority	1·805	2·261
West Midlands Fire & Civil Defence Authority	0·856	1·072
West Midlands Transport Authority	1·602	2·008
West Yorkshire		
Bradford	3·623	4·538
Calderdale	1·260	1·578
Kirklees	2·489	3·118
Leeds	6·291	7·881
Wakefield	2·320	2·906
West Yorkshire Police Authority	0·968	1·209
West Yorkshire Fire & Civil Defence Authority	0·433	0·543
West Yorkshire Transport Authority	0·812	1·018
Shire Counties		
Avon	9·415	11·795
Bedfordshire	5·753	7·207
Berkshire	9·199	11·525
Buckinghamshire	7·403	9·275
Cambridgeshire	6·496	8·138
Cheshire	9·798	12·275
Cleveland	6·307	7·901
Cornwall	3·665	4·591
Cumbria	3·796	4·756
Derbyshire	8·609	10·786
Devon	8·669	10·861
Dorset	6·409	8·029
Durham	4·215	5·281
East Sussex	7·432	9·311
Essex	16·855	21·116
Gloucestershire	4·811	6·027
Hampshire	15·434	19·336
Hereford and Worcester	6·548	8·203
Hertfordshire	11·820	14·808
Humberside	7·035	8·814
Isle of Wight	0·959	1·202
Kent	14·113	17·680
Lancashire	10·703	13·409
Leicestershire	8·569	10·735
Lincolnshire	4·664	5·843
Norfolk	7·221	9·046
Northamptonshire	5·515	6·909
Northumberland	2·383	2·986
North Yorkshire	5·629	7·052
Nottinghamshire	9·648	12·088
Oxfordshire	5·928	7·427
Shropshire	3·475	4·354
Somerset	3·862	4·839
Staffordshire	9·209	11·537
Suffolk	5·816	7·287
Surrey	11·881	14·885
Warwickshire	4·956	6·209
West Sussex	7·656	9·591
Wiltshire	4·668	5·848
Avon		
Bath	—	—
Bristol	0·599	0·751

	Guaranteed extra grant from recycling of £500 million (£ million)	Estimated extra grant from recycling of £628 million (£ million)
Kingswood	0·098	0·123
Northavon	0·171	0·214
Wansdyke	0·116	0·145
Woodspring	0·192	0·240
Bedfordshire		
North Bedfordshire	0·217	0·272
Luton	0·340	0·426
Mid Bedfordshire	0·137	0·171
South Bedfordshire	0·091	0·232
Berkshire		
Bracknell	0·190	0·238
Newbury	0·197	0·247
Reading	0·289	0·362
Slough	0·302	0·378
Windsor and Maidenhead	0·267	0·335
Wokingham	0·189	0·237
Buckinghamshire		
Aylesbury Vale	0·243	0·304
South Bucks	—	—
Chiltern	—	—
Milton Keynes	0·245	0·307
Wycombe	0·339	0·424
Cambridgeshire		
Cambridge	0·291	0·365
East Cambridgeshire	0·079	0·099
Fenland	0·096	0·120
Huntingdonshire	0·171	0·214
Peterborough	0·207	0·259
South Cambridgeshire*	0·208	0·000
Cheshire		
Chester	0·174	0·218
Congleton	0·103	0·130
Crewe and Nantwich	0·122	0·153
Ellesmere Port and Nanton*	0·069	—
Halton	0·179	0·224
Macclesfield	0·222	0·279
Vale Royal	0·147	0·184
Warrington	0·261	0·326
Cleveland		
Hartlepool	0·119	0·149
Langbaurgh	0·211	0·264
Middlesbrough	0·163	0·204
Stockton-on-Tees	0·273	0·342
Cornwall		
Caradon	0·068	0·085
Carrick	0·086	0·107
Kerrier	0·093	0·116
North Cornwall	0·070	0·088
Penwith	0·058	0·073
Restormel	0·101	0·126
Cumbria		
Allerdale	0·084	0·106
Barrow in Furness	0·067	0·084
Carlisle	0·101	0·126
Copeland	0·068	0·085
Eden	0·042	0·052
South Lakeland	0·097	0·122
Derbyshire		
Amber Valley	0·115	0·144
Bolsover	0·061	0·077
Chesterfield	0·122	0·153
Derby	0·315	0·394
Erewash	0·120	0·151
High Peak	0·089	0·111
North East Derbyshire	0·085	0·106

	Guaranteed extra grant from recycling of £500 million (£ million)	*Estimated extra grant from recycling of £628 million (£ million)*
South Derbyshire	0·098	0·123
West Derbyshire	0·067	0·085
Devon		
East Devon	0·122	0·153
Exeter	0·195	0·244
North Devon	0·074	0·093
Plymouth	0·413	0·517
South Hams	0·065	0·082
Teignbridge	0·099	0·124
Mid Devon	0·052	0·066
Torbay	0·189	0·236
Torridge	0·036	0·045
West Devon	0·039	0·049
Dorset		
Bournemouth	0·284	0·355
Christchurch	0·062	0·078
North Dorset	0·058	0·073
Poole	0·215	0·269
Purbeck	0·063	0·079
West Dorset	0·099	0·124
Weymouth and Portland	0·075	0·094
Wimborne	0·083	0·104
Durham		
Chester-le-Street	0·040	0·051
Darlington	0·117	0·146
Derwentside	0·062	0·077
Durham	0·079	0·098
Easington	0·076	0·095
Sedgefield	0·066	0·083
Teesdale	0·021	0·026
Wear Valley	0·045	0·056
East Sussex		
Brighton	0·255	0·319
Eastbourne	0·150	0·188
Hastings	0·114	0·143
Hove	0·156	0·256
Lewes	0·113	0·142
Rother	0·093	0·116
Wealden	0·127	0·159
Essex		
Basildon	—	—
Braintree	0·152	0·191
Brentwood	0·103	0·158
Castle Point	0·117	0·146
Chelmsford	0·303	0·380
Colchester	0·261	0·326
Epping Forest	0·120	0·150
Harlow	—	—
Maldon	0·081	0·101
Rochford	0·101	0·127
Southend-on-Sea	0·284	0·355
Tendring	0·148	0·186
Thurrock	—	—
Uttlesford	0·082	0·102
Gloucestershire		
Cheltenham	0·176	0·220
Cotswold	0·090	0·112
Forest of Dean	0·064	0·080
Gloucester	0·171	0·214
Stroud	0·118	0·148
Tewkesbury	0·123	0·154
Hampshire		
Basingstoke and Deane	0·209	0·261
East Hampshire	0·109	0·137
Eastleigh	0·146	0·183
Fareham	0·131	0·164
Gosport	0·112	0·140

	Guaranteed extra grant from recycling of £500 million (£ million)	Estimated extra grant from recycling of £628 million (£ million)
Hart	0·099	0·124
Havant	0·208	0·261
New Forest	0·206	0·258
Portsmouth	0·237	0·297
Rushmoor	0·123	0·154
Southampton	0·34[illegible]	0·428
Test Valley	0·134	0·167
Winchester	0·126	0·158
Hereford and Worcester		
Bromsgrove	0·130	0·162
Hereford	0·071	0·089
Leominster	0·035	0·043
Malvern Hills	0·093	0·117
Redditch	0·115	0·144
South Herefordshire	0·054	0·068
Worcester	0·132	0·165
Wychavon	0·137	0·171
Wyre Forest	0·113	0·142
Hertfordshire		
Broxbourne	0·119	0·149
Dacorum	0·224	0·280
East Hertfordshire	0·167	0·209
Hertsmere	0·055	0·170
North Hertfordshire	0·179	0·225
St. Albans	0·231	0·290
Stevenage	—	—
Three Rivers	0·125	0·157
Watford	0·167	0·209
Welwyn Hatfield	—	—
Humberside		
Beverley	0·119	0·149
Boothferry	0·054	0·068
Cleethorpes	0·087	0·109
Glanford	0·089	0·111
Great Grimsby	0·148	0·185
Holderness	0·053	0·066
Kingston upon Hull	0·377	0·472
East Yorkshire	0·072	0·090
Scunthorpe	0·078	0·098
Isle of Wight		
Medina	0·086	0·108
South Wight	0·062	0·078
Kent		
Ashford	0·110	0·137
Canterbury	0·141	0·177
Dartford	0·098	0·123
Dover	0·120	0·151
Gillingham	—	—
Gravesham	0·121	0·152
Maidstone	0·173	0·216
Rochester upon Medway	0·267	0·334
Sevenoaks	0·131	0·165
Shepway	0·120	0·150
Swale	0·123	0·155
Thanet	0·156	0·195
Tonbridge and Malling	0·132	0·166
Tunbridge Wells	0·118	0·147
Lancashire		
Blackburn	0·124	0·155
Blackpool	0·227	0·284
Burnley	0·066	0·083
Chorley	0·088	0·111
Fylde	0·086	0·108
Hyndburn	0·067	0·084
Lancaster	0·136	0·170
Pendle	0·061	0·076
Preston	0·157	0·197
Ribble Valley	0·045	0·057

	Guaranteed extra grant from recycling of £500 million (£ million)	*Estimated extra grant from recycling of £628 million (£ million)*
Rossendale	0·041	0·052
South Ribble	0·102	0·128
West Lancashire	0·125	0·157
Wyre	0·100	0·126
Leicestershire		
Blaby	0·098	0·123
Charnwood	0·227	0·285
Harborough	0·075	0·094
Hinckley and Bosworth	0·127	0·158
Leicester	0·431	0·540
Melton*	0·053	0·000
North West Leicestershire	0·101	0·126
Oadby and Wigston	0·087	0·109
Rutland*	0·038	0·000
Lincolnshire		
Boston	0·063	0·079
East Lindsey	0·122	0·153
Lincoln	0·118	0·148
North Kesteven	0·077	0·097
South Holland	0·063	0·079
South Kesteven*	0·131	0·000
West Lindsey	0·075	0·094
Norfolk		
Breckland	0·118	0·147
Broadland	0·105	0·132
Great Yarmouth	0·116	0·145
North Norfolk	0·107	0·134
Norwich	0·216	0·271
South Norfolk	0·106	0·133
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	0·153	0·192
Northamptonshire		
Corby	0·083	0·104
Daventry	0·089	0·111
East Northamptonshire	0·092	0·116
Kettering	0·080	0·100
Northampton	0·375	0·469
South Northamptonshire	0·089	0·112
Wellingborough	0·083	0·104
Northumberland		
Alnwick	0·030	0·037
Berwick-upon-Tweed	0·029	0·036
Blyth Valley	0·065	0·081
Castle Morpeth	0·061	0·076
Tynedale	0·054	0·068
Wansbeck	0·065	0·082
North Yorkshire		
Craven	0·044	0·055
Hambleton	0·079	0·099
Harrogate	0·145	0·182
Richmondshire	0·042	0·052
Ryedale	0·076	0·096
Scarborough	0·101	0·126
Selby*	0·092	—
York	0·155	0·194
Nottinghamshire		
Ashfield	0·107	0·134
Bassetlaw	—	—
Broxtowe	0·122	0·153
Gedling	0·116	0·145
Mansfield	0·076	0·096
Newark and Sherwood	0·113	0·142
Nottingham	0·556	0·697
Rushcliffe	0·130	0·163
Oxfordshire		
Cherwell	0·230	0·288
Oxford	0·279	0·350

	Guaranteed extra grant from recycling of £500 million (£ million)	Estimated extra grant from recycling of £628 million (£ million)
South Oxfordshire	0·219	0·275
Vale of White Horse	0·243	0·305
West Oxfordshire	0·106	0·132
Shropshire		
Bridgnorth	0·062	0·078
North Shropshire	0·050	0·063
Oswestry	0·031	0·038
Shrewsbury and Atcham	0·118	0·148
South Shropshire	0·030	0·038
The Wrekin	0·153	0·191
Somerset		
Mendip	0·113	0·141
Sedgemoor	0·101	0·127
Taunton Deane	0·111	0·139
West Somerset	0·065	0·082
South Somerset	0·177	0·222
Staffordshire		
Cannock Chase	0·112	0·141
East Staffordshire	0·136	0·170
Lichfield	0·129	0·162
Newcastle-under-Lyme	0·135	0·169
South Staffordshire	0·130	0·163
Stafford	0·170	0·214
Staffordshire Moorlands	0·097	0·122
Stoke-on-Trent	0·327	0·410
Tamworth	0·083	0·104
Suffolk		
Babergh	0·090	0·113
Forest Heath	0·056	0·070
Ipswich	0·219	0·274
Mid Suffolk	0·076	0·095
St. Edmundsbury	0·131	0·165
Suffolk Coastal	0·134	0·168
Waveney	0·119	0·149
Surrey		
Elmbridge	—	—
Epsom and Ewell	—	0·065
Guildford	0·253	0·316
Mole Valley	0·127	0·159
Reigate and Banstead	—	—
Runnymede	0·131	0·165
Spelthorne*	0·021	0·000
Surrey Heath	0·112	0·173
Tandridge	0·115	0·144
Waverley	0·177	0·222
Woking	0·151	0·190
Warwickshire		
North Warwickshire*	0·079	—
Nuneaton and Bedworth	0·117	0·147
Rugby	0·121	0·151
Stratford on Avon	0·149	0·187
Warwick	0·193	0·241
West Sussex		
Adur	0·080	0·100
Arun	0·162	0·203
Chichester	0·133	0·167
Crawley	—	—
Horsham	0·134	0·168
Mid Sussex	0·161	0·201
Worthing	0·154	0·193
Wiltshire		
Kennet	0·068	0·085
North Wiltshire	0·103	0·130
Salisbury	0·138	0·173
Thamesdown	0·169	0·211

	Guaranteed extra grant from recycling of £500 million (£ million)	Estimated extra grant from recycling of £628 million (£ million)
West Wiltshire	0·122	0·153
Isles of Scilly	0·030	0·038

NB The grant recycling pool of £628 million is calculated from budgeted expenditure as returned on BG12 returns.
*These authorities are in receipt of either no or 100 per cent. block grant at their budgeted expenditure level. In neither case are they covered by the grant guarantee.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has had from the city of Manchester to his Department's consultation paper entitled "Review of the Local Authority Capital Expenditure Control System in England and Wales", and to the related Green Paper on "Paying for Local Government"; how many other responses he has received; and when he expects to make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The city of Manchester's response to the proposals in the consultation paper on the review of the local authority capital control system and the related parts of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714), was sent to the Department on 23 April. My right hon. Friend will be considering this along with other 347 responses we have received before making any decisions about how best to proceed. We have also received 279 responses about the other local government finance issues discussed in the Green Paper.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average weekly cost of feeding a prisoner.

Mr. Mellor: The average weekly cost of feeding a prisoner in penal establishments in England and Wales is £5·60.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is *(a)* the average amount of money earned by prisoners for prison work and *(b)* the range of possible earnings.

Mr. Mellor: The average weekly earnings paid to inmates in prison service establishments in England and Wales is now £1·93. Details of the full range of earnings payable are contained in circular instruction No. 28/85, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much prisoners earn if they are unable to work owing to either lack of available work or to the unavailability of prison officers.

Mr. Mellor: Inmates in prison service establishments in England and Wales for whom employment is not available are paid at the basic rate of £1·28 per week.

The rate paid to inmates who are temporarily prevented from working by the non-availability of prison officers varies according to the rules of the particular pay scheme under which they are normally paid. Generally for an initial period while action is taken to redeploy the inmates, they are paid the average rate they had been earning before the interruption.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, for the latest year for which figures are available *(a)* the total number of persons jailed for all offences in England and Wales and *(b)* the total number of persons jailed in England and Wales for schedule 1 offences within the meaning of the Criminal Justice Act 1982.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 April 1986, c. *304*]: Information on the total number of persons given immediate custodial sentences is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (table 7.15 of the volume for 1984, Cmnd. 9621) and analyses by type of offence are to be found in the supplementary tables to that publication; for example, "Criminal Statistics, Supplementary Tables 1984, volume 2, table S2.4". Of the 78,000 sentenced to immediate custody in 1984, 9,600 had been convicted of offences specified in schedule 1 to the Criminal Justice Act 1982. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category A prisoners there are in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: As at 1 May 1986 there were 314 prisoners permaneently categorised A and 133 provisionally categorised A.

Prison Officers

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers are currently in post in each of Her Majesty's prisons; if he will publish comparable figures for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The number of prison officers in post in each of Her Majesty's prisons in England and Wales on 1 April 1986 is listed in column *(a)* of the table together with comparable figures for 31 December 1984 *(b)*; 31 December 1983 *(c)*; 31 December 1982 *(d)*; and 31 December 1981 *(e)*. Figures for 1980 are not available.

Establishment	(e)	(d)	(c)	(b)	(a)
Acklington	143	155	151	147	160
Albany	285	271	257	332	332
Aldington	38	36	40	37	35
Ashford	211	211	196	198	199
Ashwell	58	63	68	61	62
Askham Grange	43	41	41	42	43
Aylesbury	120	115	121	140	135
Bedford	156	154	169	181	171
Birmingham	357	348	406	403	397
Blantyre House	45	44	43	42	45
Blundeston	133	132	144	144	142
Bristol	244	243	252	249	241
Brixton	605	592	601	606	661
Brockhill	73	79	97	95	96

Establishment	(e)	(d)	(c)	(b)	(a)
Buckley Hall	45	47	44	39	40
Bullwood Hall	84	74	77	65	87
Camp Hill	195	204	195	174	174
Campsfield House	36	35	37	38	40
Canterbury	159	159	162	179	189
Cardiff	205	196	219	206	223
Castington			100	108	103
Channings Wood	126	128	150	139	149
Chelmsford	154	165	170	164	157
Coldingley	151	144	145	157	148
Cookham Wood	46	54	55	51	58
Dartmoor	217	204	216	225	239
Deerbolt	100	106	113	106	146
Dorchester	86	88	91	98	94
Dover	117	106	108	95	105
Drake Hall	68	62	72	75	73
Durham	387	369	371	364	381
East Sutton Park	23	25	24	23	29
Eastwood Park	48	49	50	53	49
Erlestoke	78	84	92	91	97
Everthorpe	103	101	104	113	110
Exeter	213	215	224	221	211
Featherstone	139	134	132	138	136
Feltham	145	134	161	167	153
Finnamore Wood	19	19	17	18	19
Ford	97	95	98	102	92
Foston Hall	37	39	37	39	37
Frankland	15	280	333	349	363
Gartree	228	213	253	273	261
Glen Parva	229	245	240	253	257
Gloucester	133	129	135	131	128
Grendon/Springhill	138	150	154	159	*150
Gringley	25	26	27	27	24
Guys Marsh	65	63	68	74	80
Haslar	45	46	45	46	43
Hatfield	63	59	59	70	72
Haverigg	107	96	102	104	102
Hewell Grange	58	47	50	55	53
Highpoint	75	76	148	178	203
Hindley	100	102	110	114	114
Hollesley Bay	150	154	221	221	200
Holloway	221	309	292	384	332
Hull	274	251	246	249	255
Huntercombe	63	62	61	59	68
Kingston	64	66	58	62	61
Kirkham	98	78	77	80	76
Kirklevington	47	46	49	49	48
Lancaster	90	91	90	95	94
Latchmere House	81	76	76	80	79
Leeds	341	350	352	373	395
Leicester	216	204	218	232	218
Lewes	195	191	196	203	193
Leyhill	55	56	61	65	66
Lincoln	210	207	223	224	226
Lindholme					143
Liverpool	419	402	394	404	418
Long Lartin	331	317	319	314	306
Lowdham Grange	91	90	84	86	80
Low Newton	106	106	116	123	110
Maidstone	202	194	197	184	187
Manchester	447	425	457	513	537
Medomsley	40	39	41	45	44
Morton Hall					33
New Hall	42	41	42	43	41
Northallerton	80	60	62	63	61
Northeye	91	91	94	98	89
North Sea Camp	62	60	62	63	61
Norwich	236	228	236	242	231
Nottingham	107	110	133	136	143
Onley	151	145	153	155	143
Oxford	106	102	106	103	108
Parkhurst	302	301	305	306	296
Pentonville	336	325	320	335	313
Portland	158	157	164	166	168
Preston	148	137	146	132	138
Pucklechurch	114	103	110	115	112
Ranby	119	118	122	120	115
Reading	141	140	144	108	138
Risley	441	445	443	463	529
Rochester	139	142	144	134	127
Rudgate	58	59	60	60	55
Send	43	44	44	46	42
Shepton Mallet	79	77	84	83	83
Shrewsbury	103	98	103	93	96
Stafford	203	192	213	210	207
Standford Hill	109	108	114	106	95
Stocken					109
Stoke Heath	131	121	132	138	138
Styal	134	132	132	149	137
Sudbury	71	69	70	65	66
Swansea	128	127	144	160	145
Swinfen Hall	81	87	100	103	97
Thorn Cross					74
Thorp Arch	101	101	97	98	89
Usk	75	75	81	85	78
The Verne	125	131	132	132	133
Wakefield	386	388	406	424	430
Wandsworth	331	335	372	412	411
Wayland					126
Wellingborough	111	110	121	136	134
Werrington	37	36	43	45	48
Wetherby	70	70	78	79	73
Whatton	81	81	78	75	77
Winchester	261	277	275	281	265
Wormwood Scrubs	513	464	464	522	498
Wymott	201	202	210	216	207

* +1

Immigration

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of non-patrials repatriated compulsorily for psychiatric reasons; and to which countries they were repatriated in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Waddington: The available information is given in the table. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

Persons repatriated under the Immigration Act after compulsory admission to hospital, by country of repatriation*

Numbers of persons

Country of repatriation	Year of repatriation				
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Cyprus	—	1	—	—	—
Egypt	1	—	—	—	—
Guyana	1	—	—	—	—
India	1	—	—	1	—
Ireland, Republic of	—	—	—	1	—
Jamaica	—	—	—	1	1
Kenya	—	—	—	1	—
Malta	1	—	—	—	—
New Zealand	—	—	—	1	1
Pakistan	—	2	1	—	—
Sierra Leone	—	—	1	—	—
Sri Lanka	—	1	—	—	—
St. Lucia	—	—	—	—	1
United States of America	1	—	—	—	—
ALL COUNTRIES	5	4	2	5	3

* Under part V of the Mental Health Act 1959, part III of the Mental Health Act 1983 or the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many potential immigrants were refused entry for psychiatric reasons in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(2) from which countries potential immigrants were refused entry for psychiatric reasons in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Waddington: The available information is given in the following table and relates to the number of occasions on which persons were refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom at a port of entry because of a mental disorder.

Number of occasions on which persons were refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom because of a mental disorder

Nationals of	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Algeria	—	1	—	2	—	—
Argentina	—	—	—	—	1	—
Australia	1	—	2	1	1	3
Austria	1	—	3	2	3	3
Bangladesh	1	—	—	—	—	1
Belgium	4	3	6	2	3	—
Brazil	—	1	1	3	1	—
Canada	3	2	3	1	2	3
Chile	—	—	—	—	—	1
Cyprus	1	1	—	—	—	—
Denmark	4	2	3	2	5	3
Egypt	1	—	—	—	—	—
Finland	4	1	2	2	2	—
France	19	20	12	17	12	9
Germany (Dem. Rep.)	—	—	1	1	1	3
Germany (Fed. Rep.)	17	17	19	12	12	1
Ghana	—	—	—	—	1	1
Greece	3	1	—	3	1	2
Hong Kong BDTC	—	—	—	2	—	—
India	1	—	—	2	3	2
Iran	2	—	—	—	—	—
Israel	—	1	1	—	—	—
Italy	5	4	5	14	2	4
Jamaica	1	2	1	—	—	—
Japan	—	1	2	1	1	—
Lebanon	—	1	—	—	—	1
Malaysia	—	1	—	—	1	1
Mauritius	—	—	—	—	—	1
Mexico	—	1	1	—	—	—
Morocco	—	2	2	1	—	1
Netherlands	12	8	11	14	6	11
New Zealand	—	5	—	—	—	—
Nigeria	—	1	—	—	1	1
Norway	2	2	1	—	1	2
Pakistan	—	—	1	—	2	2
Poland	—	—	—	—	—	1
Portugal	—	—	—	2	1	1
Saudi Arabia	—	—	—	—	1	—
Sierra Leone	—	—	—	—	1	—
Singapore	—	1	—	—	—	—
South Africa	—	—	1	—	—	1
Spain	2	2	2	2	9	4
Sri Lanka	—	1	—	—	—	—
Sudan	—	—	—	—	—	1
Sweden	4	4	2	5	7	4
Switzerland	5	3	3	4	1	1
Syria	—	—	1	—	—	1
Tanzania	—	—	—	1	—	—
Trinidad and Tobago	—	1	—	—	—	1
Tunisia	—	—	—	1	—	1
Turkey	—	—	2	—	1	1
Uganda	—	—	1	—	—	—
United Kingdom Passport holders	—	—	1	—	—	1
United States of America	28	29	25	21	31	36
Yugoslavia	1	1	—	2	—	2
Other countries	1	2	6	1	4	—
Stateless	4	2	5	8	5	7
All nationalities	127	124	126	129	123	125

Peacock Committee Report

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it remains his expectation that he will receive the report of the Peacock committee in the summer; and when he expects to make it available to hon. Members.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes. My right hon. Friend hopes to be able to present the report to Parliament before the summer recess.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ethnic Minorities (Psychiatric Facilities)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities have a specific working group or specific policy concerned with the provision of equal and appropriate psychiatric facilities for members of ethnic minorities; and if he will name them.

Mr. Whitney This information is not collected centrally.

Spectacles

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the vouchers which the Government propose to introduce for spectacles lenses will be sufficiently flexible to meet the cost of the more expensive lenses required by certain patients with severe eyesight problems.

Mr. Hayhoe There will be a small range of vouchers with values related to the powers of different groups of lenses. The amount of financial help will therefore depend on the severity of the patient's eyesight problem but is intended to provide for the purchase of a basic pair of spectacles related to the individual's needs.

Hospitals

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many new hospitals have been started since May 1979; and where are they located.

Mr. Whitney The number of new hospital schemes in England started since May 1979 is set out in the table. This lists only those costing in excess of £5 million for the relevant data for Scotland and Wales the hon. Member may wish to ask my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales.

Region	*Project/scheme*
Northern Regional Health Authority	North Tyneside, scheme 1, phase 1
Northern Regional Health Authority	Queen Elizabeth Gateshead, scheme 3, phase 1
Northern Regional Health Authority	South Cleveland General, scheme 2, phase 1B
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	Bridlington New Community Hospital
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	Goole New Community Hospital
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	Scarborough District General Hospital, phase 1 (nucleus)
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	Staincliffe District General Hospital, phase 1 (nucleus)
Trent Regional Health Authority	Chesterfield and North Derby Royal Hospital, phase 2B
Trent Regional Health Authority	Derby City, phase 1
Trent Regional Health Authority	Derby Royal Infirmary, phase 2
Trent Regional Health Authority	Glenfield District General Hospital, phase 1
Trent Regional Health Authority	Lincoln County, phase 1
Trent Regional Health Authority	Northern General Geriatric
Trent Regional Health Authority	Northern General, phase 1C
Trent Regional Health Authority	Rotherham District General Hospital, phase 2
East Anglian Regional Health Authority	Hinchingbrooke Hospital Huntingdon, phase 3
East Anglian Regional Health Authority	Ipswich, phase 1, Heath road wing (nucleus)
East Anglian Regional Health Authority	Peterborough second District General Hospital, phase 1
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	Hemel Hempstead, phase 1
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	St. Marys W2, phase 1B
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	Watford (Shrodells wing), phase 3
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	Broomfield, phase 5
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	Colchester District General Hospital, phase 2
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	Harold Wood Hospital, phase 1
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	Homerton (Eastern), phase 1
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	Newham Hospital, phase 1 (nucleus)
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	Kent and Sussex—Tunbridge Wells, phase 1
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	Lewisham District General Hospital, phase 1A
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	Maidstone District General Hospital, phase 1 (nucleus)
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	Orpington, phase 1
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	Croydon/Mayday District General Hospital (nucleus)
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	St. Georges block H, phase 2A
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	St. Georges blocks G2 and F, phase 2
Wessex Regional Health Authority	Bournemouth District General Hospital, phase 1
Wessex Regional Health Authority	Royal Hampshire County, Winchester, phase 4 (nucleus)
Wessex Regional Health Authority	Royal South Hampshire, Southampton, phase 3
Wessex Regional Health Authority	St. Marys—Isle of Wight—phase 3B (nucleus)
Oxford Regional Health Authority	West Dorset District General Hospital, phase 1
South Western Regional Health Authority	Milton Keynes District General Hospital, phase 1
South Western Regional Health Authority	Cheltenham General, phase 1B
South Western Regional Health Authority	West Somerset (Musgrove park) District General Hospital, phase 1
	Weston-super-Mare New Hospital

Region	Project/scheme
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	Bromsgrove Redditch District General Hospital, phase 1, contract 2 (nucleus)
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	City General, Stoke, surgical accommodation (nucleus)
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	Telford District General Hospital, phase 1
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	Walsall, phases 4A and 4B (nucleus)
Mersey Regional Health Authority	Halton District General Hospital, phase 2 (nucleus)
Mersey Regional Health Authority	Macclesfield Development (nucleus)
Mersey Regional Health Authority	North Sefton District General Hospital, Southport, phase 1 (nucleus)
North Western Regional Health Authority	Hope Hospital, Salford, phase 1
North Western Regional Health Authority	Oldham District General Hospital, phase 1
North Western Regional Health Authority	Tameside General, phase 2
Non Regional Health Authority	Hammersmith Hospital redevelopment, phase 1

Artificial Limb and Appliance Service

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the names of the members of the new board of control of the artificial limb and appliance service, and their present occupations.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) on 6 May.

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list by location the artificial limb and appliance centres in England, the number of limb-fitting surgeons and the cost of each of the centres in the last financial year available.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is as follows:

Centres and Sub-Centres	Number of Medical officers*
Birmingham	
Leicester	4
Stoke on Trent	
Wolverhampton	
Brighton	1
Bristol	2
Cambridge	
Norwich	2
Cleveland	1
Exeter	
Plymouth	1
Gillingham	1
Harold Wood	2
Leeds	3
Hull	
Liverpool	2
London, Kingston	
Balham	
Ealing	7
London, Roehampton	
Stanmore	
Manchester	3
Preston	
Newcastle	2
Carlisle	
Nottingham	1
Oxford	1
Portsmouth	
Ringwood	1
Sheffield	1

* The term "Medical Officer" rather than "limb-fitting surgeon" is now used to describe DHSS medical staff based at ALACs because the doctors concerned do not undertake surgical procedures as part of their normal duties.
The staff numbers shown exclude headquarters staff at London and Blackpool.

Detailed costs are not available for each centre. The total cost of the artificial limb and appliance service in 1985-86 was £80 million.

Severely Disabled People (Cushions)

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reconsider his decision to suspend the provision of special cushions for the severely disabled.

Mr. Newton: We have made no such decision. A variety of cushions for the severely disabled may be supplied by health authorities, local authorities and the Department's wheelchair service, depending on the reason for the requirement. The provision of one type of cushion through the wheelchair service was temporarily interrupted earlier this year, but limited supplies are again available to meet clinical needs.

Benefits

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of claimants in receipt of *(a)* sickness benefit, *(b)* invalidity benefit and pension, *(c)* industrial disablement benefit, *(d)* non-contributory invalidity pension, housewives non-contributory invalidity pension or severe disablement allowance for the latest available year at the Greenock and Port Glasgow offices of his Department.

Mr. Major: The number of claimants in receipt of sickness and invalidity benefit/pension and severe disablement allowance as at 8 April 1986, and in receipt of industrial disablement benefit as at 11 February 1986 (the latest dates for which information is available) at the Greenock and Port Glasgow social security offices is as follows:

	Greenock	Port Glasgow
Sickness and invalidity benefit/pension	3,892	1,705
Severe disablement allowance	459	251
Industrial disablement benefit	560	391

Separate records are not kept of the numbers of claimants in receipt of sickness and invalidity benefit/pension.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the number of claimants excluding pensioner claimants and claimants with dependent children, in receipt of *(a)* unemployment benefit only, *(b)* supplementary benefit only and *(c)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit for the latest available year at the Greenock and Port Glasgow offices of his Department;

(2) what is the number of claimant couples with children in receipt of *(a)* unemployment benefit only, *(b)* supplementary benefit only and *(c)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit for the latest available year at the Greenock and Port Glasgow offices of his Department.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available. Statistics are not kept routinely so that the information requested could be obtained only by a special exercise, which would be disproportionately expensive.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of *(a)* single payments and *(b)* urgent needs payments, weekly and one-off, paid to claimants who (i) are under pensionable age and are not required to register for work, (ii) are under pensionable age required to register for work and (iii) are over pensionable age, and what is *(x)* the average rate per 1,000 claimants in (i), (ii) and (iii), *(y)* the average payment made to claimants in (i), (ii) and (iii) and *(z)* the number of claimants in (i), (ii) and (iii) with dependent children for the latest available year at the Greenock and Port Glasgow offices of his Department.

Mr. Major: The following table shows, for the categories of claimants specified, numbers of single payments and urgent needs payments made in the year up to 8 April 1986, by the Greenock and Port Glasgow offices. Comparable information about the number of claimants with dependent children is not available.

	Greenock ILO	*Port Glasgow ILO*
A. *Single payments*		
Claimants under pensionable age not required to register for work		
Number of Payments	5,130	3,395
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	1,593	2,241
Average amount	£87·72	£74·96
Claimants under pensionable age required to register for work		
Number of Payments	5,325	4,398
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	1,138	1,953
Average amount	£92·36	£92·84
Claimants over pensionable age		
Number of Payments	2,560	1,035
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	735	819
Average amount	£41·58	£64·88
B. *Urgent needs payments*		
Claimants under pensionable age not required to register for work		
Number of Payments	441	97
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	137	64
Claimants under pensionable age required to register for work		
Number of Payments	415	279
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	89	124
Claimants over pensionable age		
Number of Payments	28	4
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	8	3

Abbreviation ILO=Integrated Local Office.
The amounts of urgent needs payments are not recorded.
The number of awards of single payments and urgent needs payments for the year ending April 1986 have been set against the count of live cases in action as at 12 February 1986 to arrive at a rate per 1,000 claimants. These are the latest available figures.

Private Facilities

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for 31 December 1984 for each health district *(a)* the total number of beds in private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975, *(b)* the total number of state registered nurses working in those institutions and the appropriate whole-time equivalent figure and *(c)* the total number of all nursing staff working in those institutions and the appropriate whole-time equivalent figure;

(2) if he will give for 31 December 1984 for each health district *(a)* the total number of beds in private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975 which contain operating theatres, *(b)* the total number of state registered nurses working in those institutions and the appropriate whole-time equivalent figure and *(c)* the total number of all nursing staff working in those institutions and the appropriate whole-time equivalent figure.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 April 1986, c. *290*.]: A table giving the information requested has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list *(a)* the registered nursing homes with operating theatres and *(b)* all registered nursing homes which were registered (i) on 31 December 1983 but not 31 December 1982 and (ii) on 31 December 1984 but not 31 December 1983.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 April 1986, c. *290*.]: Tables giving the information requested have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the registered nursing homes with operating theatres in England on 21 December 1984, giving in each case the number of beds and the health district and region.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 April 1986, c. *290*.]: A table giving the information requested has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of private hospitals, homes and clinics registered on 31 December 1984 under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975 as amended by the Health Services Act 1980 which contain both operating theatres and *(a)* pathology departments and *(b)* radiology departments; and if he will give the figures for each region.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 April 1986, c. *290*]: The information requested is given in the table.

Private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1975, as amended by Health Services Act 1980 Position at 31 December 1984.

Region	*Number of institutions with operating theatres and pathology departments*	*Number of institutions with operating theatres and radiology departments*
Northern	3	3
Yorkshire	5	9
Trent	6	7
East Anglian	3	5
North West Thames	8	9
North East Thames	11	18
South East Thames	7	12
South West Thames	6	10
Wessex	7	13
Oxford	5	11
South Western	1	9
West Midlands	6	9
Mersey	3	5
North Western	4	7
England	75	127

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what were the total numbers of *(a)* private hospitals, homes and clinics registered on 31 December 1984 under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975 which contain operating theatres and *(b)* beds which they contain; and if he will give the figures for each region;

(2) what were the total numbers of *(a)* private hospitals, homes and clinics registered on 31 December 1984 under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975 and *(b)* beds which they contain; and if he will give the figures for each region.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 April 1986, c. *290*]: The information requested is given in the table.

Private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1975, as amended by Health Services Act 1980 Position at 31 December 1984

Region	*All institutions*		*Those with operating theatres*	
	Number of institutions	*Number of beds*	*Number of institutions*	*Number of beds*
Northern	29	922	4	104
Yorkshire	100	2,814	22	489
Trent	92	2,596	23	518
East Anglian	44	1,021	11	312
North West Thames	60	2,535	37	1,105
North East Thames	84	3,127	69	1,573
South East Thames	222	6,049	28	849
South West Thames	188	5,293	22	772
Wessex	161	3,772	28	590
Oxford	64	2,314	18	442
South Western	174	4,427	19	431
West Midlands	102	2,876	25	571
Mersey	93	2,449	11	312
North Western	78	2,703	25	565
ENGLAND	1,491	42,898	342	8,633

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the total numbers of *(a)* nursing staff and *(b)* medical practitioners employed (i) by all the private hospitals, homes and clinics registered on 31 December 1984 under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Act 1975 as amended by the Health Services Act 1980 and (ii) by those private hospitals, homes and clinics which contain operating theatres; and if he will give the figures for each region.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 April 1986, c. *290*]: The information requested is given in the table.

Private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1975, as amended by Health Services Act 1980
Position at 31 December 1984

Region	Number (whole time equivalent) of nursing staff		Number of Institutions with resident medical practitioners	
	All institutions	Those with operating theatres	All institutions	Those with operating theatres
Northern	510·9	101·6	2	2
Yorkshire	1846·6	455·6	5	4
Trent	1739·0	419·8	1	0
East Anglian	811·1	314·6	2	2
North West Thames	1867·6	996·1	11	9
North East Thames	2473·7	1486·8	21	17
South East Thames	3854·0	702·4	9	8
South West Thames	3560·9	655·9	9	6
Wessex	2662·3	452·4	9	7
Oxford	1628·7	419·1	7	4
South Western	2892·3	430·2	10	4
West Midlands	2076·6	517·2	5	3
Mersey	1660·0	311·6	4	2
North Western	1848·0	447·5	3	2
England	29431·7	7710·8	98	70

NHS Beds

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the ratio of National Health Service beds to population by region for the latest month for which figures are available; and what were the comparative figures for 1979 and 1983.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 April 1986, c. *436*]: The available information is given in the table. Since it can be misleading to consider bed figures alone, I have included national figures for the number of cases treated.

National Health Services Hospitals in England
Average daily number of available beds per thousand population

Region	1979	1983	1984
Northern	8·1	8·0	7·9
Yorkshire	8·3	7·8	7·6
Trent	6·9	6·6	6·5
East Anglian	7·0	6·8	6·6
North West Thames	*8·1	7·3	7·1
North East Thames	*7·8	7·7	7·5
South East Thames	*7·9	7·4	7·0
South West Thames	*8·9	8·0	7·8
Wessex	7·0	6·5	6·4
Oxford	6·0	5·4	5·3
South Western	8·0	7·6	7·3
West Midlands	7·0	6·7	6·5
Mersey	8·9	8·2	7·8
North Western	7·6	7·6	7·4
England	7·7	7·3	7·1
Inpatient discharges and deaths (millions)			
England	5·4	6·0	6·2

* Figures for the Thames regions for 1979 are not strictly comparable with those for 1983 and 1985 because of changes made in the National Health Service reorganisation of 1982.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list by regions the current waiting list for treatment of all kinds for the latest month for which figures are available and the comparative figures for 1979 and 1983.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply, 30 April 1986*, c. *436*.] The information requested is given in the table.

Numbers of persons on inpatient waiting lists at 30 September for admission to National Health Service Hospitals.

Region	1979	1983	1985
Northern	42,288	44,478	36,154
Yorkshire	47,223	49,363	45,763
Trent	66,498	69,156	62,190
East Anglian	27,971	33,080	27,388
North West Thames	*43,595	41,015	40,265
North East Thames	*53,146	58,911	66,406
South East Thames	*49,920	51,627	50,087
South West Thames	*37,244	37,470	36,752
Wessex	40,222	46,879	42,003
Oxford	36,180	36,082	33,309
South Western	45,876	47,534	43,639
West Midlands	87,693	83,598	80,974
Mersey	38,572	34,274	30,141
North Western	71,948	62,525	58,465
Special Health Authorities	7,350	7,763	7,713
England	695,726	703,755	661,249

* Figures for the Thames regions for 1979 are not strictly comparable with those for 1983 and 1985 because of changes made in the National Health Service reorganisation of 1982.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk

Mr. Alexander asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much milk New Zealand imported from the United Kingdom in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer: There have been no exports of liquid milk from the United Kingdom to New Zealand in the years 1983-85. The following quantities of milk products were exported:

tonnes

	1983	1984	1985
Skimmed Milk Powder	Nil	75	16
Butter/Butteroil	46	Nil	Nil
Cheese	37	34	29

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish figures showing the incidence of bovine tuberculosis in each English county for every year since 1981.

Mrs. Fenner: The number of new herds with bovine tuberculosis reactors in each English county for each year 1981-85 is shown in the table.

County	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Avon	10	20	18	24	15
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	—
Buckinghamshire	—	—	—	—	1
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	1
Cheshire	—	1	6	2	8
Cleveland	—	—	—	—	—
Cornwall	75	60	67	54	54
Cumbria	1	3	4	4	7
Derbyshire	—	—	1	1	—
Devon	37	28	28	42	28
Dorset	10	3	15	21	27
Durham	—	1	—	—	1
East Sussex	2	3	—	1	2
Essex	—	—	—	1	1
Gloucestershire	26	21	19	20	19
Greater Manchester	—	—	1	—	1
Greater London	—	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	—	4
Humberside	—	—	2	1	1
Hereford and Worcester	—	7	1	3	9
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—
Isle of Wight	—	—	—	—	1
Kent	1	—	—	—	2
Lancashire	4	2	4	3	6
Leicestershire	2	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	1	—	1
Merseyside	—	—	1	—	1
Norfolk	—	—	—	—	1
Northamptonshire	1	2	—	3	1
Northumberland	5	4	1	1	—
North Yorkshire	3	4	1	3	4
Nottinghamshire	2	—	—	—	1
Oxfordshire and Berkshire	—	—	1	—	1
Shropshire	1	6	3	3	5
Somerset	—	7	3	9	12
South Yorkshire	—	1	—	—	2
Staffordshire	6	10	7	8	11
Suffolk	2	—	—	—	—
Surrey	1	1	2	2	—
Tyne & Wear	—	—	—	—	—
Warwickshire	1	1	3	1	2
West Midlands	—	1	1	1	1
West Sussex	1	2	5	—	3
West Yorkshire	1	—	—	—	2
Wiltshire	31	17	27	22	26
Total (England)	223	205	222	230	262

Water Pollution

Mr. Evennett asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what liaison arrangements his Department maintains with water authorities for controlling water pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My Department maintains close liaison with the water authorities at both national and local level on the control of water pollution.

Sherry

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *440*, why the provisions on British sherry in article 129 of the Treaty of Accession of Spain and Portugal required to be enacted as a means of providing for the continued use of this description; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986]: With the accession of Spain to the European Community it was recognised that under Community regulation 338/79, the description "Sherry" would otherwise have been restricted to the quality wines from the Jerez region of Spain. Therefore this derogation in respect of "British Sherry" was negotiated.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount set aside in the budget for the common agricultural policy each year since 1972 and the amount actually spent; and what is the forecast for the current year.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986]: The following table shows the amounts entered for expenditure under the common agricultural policy in the original budget for each year since 1972 and the amount actually spent each year, other than 1985 for which the final figure is not yet available. The budget adopted by the European Parliament for 1986 provides 22,009 mecu for expenditure under the CAP but the Commission has announced its intention of proposing a supplementary budget to provide a further 1,015 mecu for CAP expenditure.

	Original budget (excluding supplementary budgets)	*Outturn*
	mua	*mua*
1973	3,263	3,786
1974	3,839	3,228
1975	4,306	4,914
1976	5,490	5,793
1977	6,581	6,964
	mecu	*mecu*
1978	9,131	9,000
1979	10,022	10,880
1980	11,878	11,943
1981	13,401	11,581
1982	14,533	13,077
1983	14,786	16,637
1984	17,288	19,092
1985	20,755	n.a.

Sources: EC Budgets, EAGGF Financial Reports.
EC Court of Auditors Reports.

Note: Before 1978, Community expenditure was expressed in units of account. As this unit had a different basis from the present ECU the figures for 1973 to 1977 are not directly comparable with those for later years.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Tea Rooms

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Lord Privy Seal what would be the estimated extra cost of opening the Members' Tea Room at *(a)* 9 am and *(b)* 9.15 am on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Mr. Biffen: The extra staffing cost of opening the Tea Room at 9 am on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays would be about £30 per week. On the same basis, the extra cost of opening at 9.15 am would be about £15 per week.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Republic of Ireland

18. **Mr. Gow** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I see the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic regularly at EC meetings. The next such meeting will be in Brussels on 12-13 of this month, and there will be a further one on 7-8 June in the Netherlands.

Libya

20. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the present state of relations with Libya.

28. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations with Libya.

45. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Libya.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have been discussing with our partners and allies a concerted programme of action to combat the threat of Libyan-directed terrorism. Specific action has been taken to implement the decisions taken by the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve in Luxembourg on 21 April. Effective measures were also agreed at the Tokyo summit.

On the British community in Libya, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas).

23. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will outline the measures agreed by the European Economic Community to restrict the activities of Libyan nationals; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer my hon. Friend to my statement to the House on 23 April, at column 299, about the measures agreed by Foreign Ministers of the Twelve on 21 April.

26. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the impact on Britain's relations with other countries of British involvement in the recent United States raid on Libya.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have taken careful note of the reactions of other countries, which have demonstrated considerable understanding of why we supported the action taken by the United States against Libyan state-directed terrorism.

37. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have taken place with the United States Government concerning the situation in Libya.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We continue to have full and frequent discussions with the United States Government about Libya. The most recent occasion for a high level exchange of views was during the Tokyo summit on 4 to 6 May.

40. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by European Economic Community countries to the United Kingdom about its public support for the United States military action in Libya.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell).

56. **Mr. Barnett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which European Economic Community countries have publicly condemned, and which have publicly supported, the United States military attack on Libya.

65. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which European Economic Community countries have supported the United States military attack on Libya.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Apart from the United Kingdom, which supported the United States action, the initial reaction of most EC countries was cautious, and in some cases critical. All our partners agreed on the urgent need for collective action to counter Libyan state directed terrorism: and as I told the House in my statement on 23 April we have now agreed on a package of measures for this purpose.

57. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consult his European Economic Community colleagues before giving assent to further support for the use of United States air bases in the United Kingdom in mounting military attacks on Libya.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The use of United States forces of bases in the United Kingdom is a matter for joint decision by Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government. We are consulting our European Community partners very closely about what more should be done to counter Libyan state-directed terrorism.

17. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from his European Economic Community colleagues concerning British involvement in the United States raid on Libya on 15 April.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell).

19. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from Arab states concerning British involvement in the United States raid on Libya on 15 April.

Mr. Renton: We have had some expressions of criticism, of varying degrees of formality, from certain Arab countries. However, as my right hon. and learned Friend said on 23 April, the Arab world has been more understanding than many people at first thought likely.

Middle East

21. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current progress towards peace in the middle east.

27. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a progress report on the middle east peace process.

86. **Mr. Walters** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on efforts being made to revive the middle east peace process.

Mr. Renton: We continue to support realistic efforts to achieve peaceful solutions for the region's conflicts.

31. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to take any fresh initiative to seek to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute following the action by the United States of America in Libya; and if he will make a statement.

61. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to encourage a new initiative in the middle east.

Mr. Renton: We continue to attach great importance to a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israel dispute and are in close touch with the parties, with whom the prime responsibility for progress lies.

Afghanistan

22. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the United Nations Secretary General to discuss Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to see the United Nations Secretary General in the near future. He would expect to discuss Afghanistan during their meeting.

Chile

24. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has held with the Chilean Government concerning human rights in Chile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As I told the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) on 9 April, we continue to make clear our concern about the Chilean Government's human rights record.

We supported both the resolution at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights of 14 March criticising Chile's record and the EC presidency statement of 18 March expressing concern about restriction of freedoms in Chile.

Contadora Countries

25. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent contacts he has had with the Contadora group of countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend last held discussions with the Contadora group at the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the European Community, central America and the Contadora countries in Luxembourg, last November.

In April the Dutch Foreign Minister, Mr. Van den Broek, in his capacity as President in Office of the Council of Ministers of the European Community, had informal discussions with the participants in the Contadora meeting in Panama following which the Twelve publicly urged the central American states to continue negotiating a comprehensive and verifiable Contadora agreement.

Central America

29. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit central America.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to do so.

41. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the United States of America concerning United States foreign policy in central America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. and learned Friend made clear on 9 April in reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) at column 155, we support the Contadora peace initiative; we do not believe the problems of central America can be solved by armed force. The United States Government are well aware of our views.

EC (Foreign Policy)

30. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the ways in which he expects the new European Economic Community foreign policy secretariat to improve the co-ordination of foreign policy within the European Economic Community.

Mrs. Chalker: The new secretariat will work under the authority of the presidency of the day. It will help to provide continuity between presidencies. It will support the presidency in organising the work of political co-operation. And it will help to ensure consistency between foreign policy objectives identified by member states in political co-operation and the external policies separately decided upon within the Community framework on matters such as trade and aid.

Jordan

32. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Our relations with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan are excellent.

CSCE, Switzerland

33. **Mr. Burt** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters have been raised by the British delegation to the conference of security and co-operation in Europe meeting of experts on human contacts in Berne, Switzerland.

Mr. Renton: The delegation has already raised a large number of issues covered by the mandate for the meeting, especially those of humanitarian concern such as divided families. I am arranging for copies of all the main statements made by the head of the United Kingdom delegation, Sir Anthony Williams, to be placed in the Library of the House.

53. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British delegation at the conference for co-operation and security in Europe conference of experts on human contacts in Berne will raise the subject of difficulties encountered by tourists visiting the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Renton: Yes. We expect to address all items in the mandate for the meeting, which includes tourism.

Israel

34. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations with Israel.

Mr. Renton: There are close links between the United Kingdom and Israel. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has accepted an invitation to visit Israel soon.

Test Ban Treaty

35. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he makes of the implication of the United Kingdom's acquisition of the Trident missile system for the negotiation of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Renton: We remain committed to seeking progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty, but believe it would be premature for negotiations proper to be resumed until the prospects for agreement are better. The Government are equally committed to the modernisation of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent, and will take steps to ensure this, in the same way as previous Governments have done. In the absence of any immediate prospects of CTBT negotiations, there is no linkage between the two issues.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultation he has had with the United States Administration on prospects for a comprehensive test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: As my right hon. and learned Friend said on 5 February, views on nuclear testing constraints have been exchanged periodically with the United States and the Soviet Union, participants in the trilateral negotiations which were suspended in 1980, as well as with other states.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

36. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will, during his presidency of the European Economic Community, seek to meet the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Town Twinning

38. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is given by his Department to projects involving twinning of United Kingdom towns with towns in other countries.

Mr. Eggar: In the United Kingdom, town twinning is co-ordinated by the joint twinning committee of Local Authority Associations of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This body deals directly with local authorities and twinning associations in the United Kingdom. The FCO works closely with the joint twinning committee in the development of partnerships. Its departments in London and United Kingdom missions abroad also assist this process.

Chemical Weapons

39. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report progress on the work of the chemical weapons convention at the conference on disarmament in Geneva.

42. **Sir Peter Blaker** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there has been any recent progress in the negotiations on chemical weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on 24 April at column 222.

Falkland Islands

43. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if fishery practices around the Falkland Islands were a subject of discussion during the recent visit to the Falklands by the Minister of State, the right hon. Baroness Young; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and noble Friend discussed the subject of fisheries extensively with councillors and at a public meeting during her visit to the Falkland Islands from 23 to 28 February. She explained in detail our policy of working for a multilaterally-based conservation and management regime under FAO auspices.

Nicaragua

44. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy regarding the action taken by Nicaragua against the United States of America at the International Court of Justice.

Mr. Eggar: It would not be appropriate for us to comment on a matter on which the International Court of Justice is still deliberating.

Spain-Gibraltar (Relations)

46. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between Spain and Gibraltar since Spanish accession to the European Economic Community.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Relations between Spain and Gibraltar have developed steadily since the opening of the frontier last year. Spanish accession to the European Community has given this process a substantial further impetus.

Force Reductions (Europe)

47. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Mr. Gorbachev's recent proposals for the reduction of forces in Europe.

Mr. Renton: We welcome Mr. Gorbachev's recognition that it is necessary to address both the imbalance of conventional forces in Europe and the question of nuclear arms reductions. We shall consider his idea carefully in consultation with our allies. Evidence of genuine Eastern interest in conventional arms control would of course be provided by constructive responses to the serious Western proposals on the table at the mutual and balanced force reductions talks in Vienna and at the Stockholm conference on disarmament in Europe.

Washington DC (Ministerial Visit)

48. **Mr. Temple Morris** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to seek to make an official visit to Washington DC.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I will be visiting Washington from 27 to 28 May when I shall have the opportunity to discuss with Secretary of State Shultz a wide range of international issues.

Bulgaria (Turkish Minority)

49. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking within the context of the conference for security and co-operation in Europe in the light of the Amnesty International report on the treatment of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Reports of mistreatment, including those quoted in the Amnesty International report, have not been satisfactorily explained by the Bulgarian authorities. This is a matter of concern, which we have pointed out to the Bulgarian authorities, both bilaterally and in international fora. The issue was raised at CSCE meetings in Ottawa and Budapest in 1985, and has also been raised at the current meeting in Berne.

Disarmament

50. **Mr. Marland** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to publicise those elements in recent Soviet disarmament proposals which are unacceptable to Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Renton: In his speech to the Foreign Press Association on 17 March my right hon. and learned Friend gave a detailed assessment of current Soviet proposals relating to both the Geneva Nuclear and Space Talks and to the other arms control negotiations currently in progress. A copy of the speech is available in the Library. We are still studying the latest proposals on conventional arms control, made in East Berlin on 18 April by Mr. Gorbachev.

Helsinki Final Act

51. **Mr. Knowles** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to discuss Soviet infringements of the Helsinki final act with a representative of the Soviet Government.

Mr. Renton: We take every suitable opportunity to discuss with the Soviet Government the importance of better implementation of the Helsinki final act. My right hon. and learned Friend expects to do so when he next meets the Soviet Foreign Minister.

Anglo-Arab Relations

52. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's relations with the Arab countries following the United States attack on Libya.

Mr. Renton: We do not believe the action taken by the United States against Libya has significantly impaired our relations with the Arab countries.

Anglo-American Relations

54. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has held with the United States of America concerning the implications for United States-United Kingdom relations of current action against the United States of America in the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Mr. Eggar: We regularly discuss important issues with the United States Government. They are well aware of our views.

Anglo-Indian Relations

55. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the state of Anglo-Indian relations in the wake of his visit to India.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend was given a warm and cordial welcome; relations are good.

Anglo-Soviet Relations

58. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the impact of Her Majesty's Government's involvement in the bombing of Libya on Anglo-Soviet relations.

Mr. Renton: The Soviet Union protested to Her Majesty Ambassador in Moscow about our support for the United States action against terrorist targets in Libya. He responded vigorously. Bilateral exchanges with the Soviet

Union continue, including a recent successful visit by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. We look to the Soviet Union to use its influence with Libya to restrain it from promoting terrorism.

Terrorism

59. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest international action to combat terrorism from the middle east and elsewhere.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement given by my right hon. and learned Friend on 23 April at column 299.

Foreign Affairs Council

60. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to put the matter of kidnap insurance on the agenda of the next meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council.

Mrs. Chalker: The question of kidnap insurance is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. Ministers of the Interior and of Justice of the Twelve agreed in The Hague on 24 April that the possibility of measures against kidnap ransom payments should be studied urgently by officials.

European Community

62. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the priorities which the Government will pursue during their presidency of the European Economic Community.

Mrs. Chalker: I have nothing to add to the answer that my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard) on 5 March at column 176.

EC (Libya)

63. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the European Economic Community has any plans to extend its measures imposed on Libya to other states.

Mrs. Chalker: Not at present. However, the actions taken by the Community against Libyan state terrorism are a clear warning to any other state which behaves in the same way.

Iraq (Human Rights)

64. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make representations to the Government of Iraq on human rights violations there.

Mr. Renton: We are always concerned about allegations of human rignts violations, wherever they occur. The Iraqi Government are fully aware of our close concern and this was reaffirmed to the Iraqi Foreign Minister when he visited London in December.

Nuclear Test Ban

66. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why Her Majesty's Government rejected the proposal at the conference on disarmament in Geneva to establish an ad hoc committee on a nuclear test ban to initiate the multilateral negotiation of a treaty for the prohibition of all nuclear weapons tests.

Mr. Renton: It has long been our policy that solutions to outstanding verification issues would have to be more apparent before it would be appropriate to resume negotiations proper. We remain however ready to discuss at the Conference on Disarmament, with other interested parties, the issues of verification and the possible scope of an agreement. This approach is reflected in the long-standing draft mandate for future work of the Western Group at the Conference on Disarmament. We regret that other countries have so far not accepted it.

Nicaraguan Ambassador

67. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the ambassador of Nicaragua; and if he has any plans to meet him in the near future.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has not had an official meeting with the ambassador since February 1985. However, he regularly meets ambassadors at official functions.

United States

68. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects he expects to discuss at his next meeting with representatives of the United States Government.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend will have the opportunity to discuss a wide range of international issues when he meets Secretary of State Shultz in Washington on 27 May.

South Africa

69. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received advocating the use of economic sanctions against South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: As I told the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) on 5 February, we receive a large amount of correspondence both for and against the imposition of economic sanctions against South Africa.

It remains our view that further indiscriminate economic and trade sanctions would not help to bring about the necessary changes which we all wish to see in South Africa.

76. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the most recent Government representations to the South African Government.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend had an opportunity to discuss a range of current issues with the South African ambassador on 25 April.

77. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We remain most concerned at the continuing violence in South Africa. We welcomed the recent repeal of the pass laws as one further step in the

removal of discriminatory legislation. We are also studying the implications of a White Paper on the reform of influx control. There is a long way to go, but we hope that such measures will improve the climate for the suspension of violence and the beginning of political dialogue which are so urgently needed.

78. **Mr. Terry Fields** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the European Economic Community will next discuss its policy towards South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Foreign Ministers of the Twelve exchange views regularly on South Africa. No date has been set for their next discussion.

81. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of talks between the South African authorities and the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group.

Mrs. Chalker: The members of the Commonwealth group serve in their individual capacities and are independent of Governments. We were encouraged by the group's description of their discussions in South Africa, including those with the South African Government, as "useful and constructive".

88. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Government policy on sanctions against South Africa in the light of Bishop Tutu's recent call on the international community for punitive sanctions.

Mrs. Chalker: We are opposed to further indiscriminate economic and trade sanctions against South Africa. We believe that, rather than helping to bring about the peaceful change which we all want to see, such sanctions could make matters worse, increasing unemployment and stiffening resistance to change within South Africa.

Human Rights (Turkey)

70. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, when he next meets the Foreign Ministers in the European Council, he will raise the subject of human rights in Turkey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to raise this question when he next sees the Foreign Ministers of the European Community. We take every opportunity to speak to the Turkish Government about human rights. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised this question with Mr. Ozal during his recent visit. He assured us that progress would continue. This progress has been recognised in recent expert reports from the Council of Europe and in the settlement of the Five Nations case against Turkey at the European Commission of Human Rights.

Mr. Sallam Msallem

71. **Dr. M. S. Miller** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the statement by Mr. Sallem Msallem, a Libyan diplomat attached to the Saudi Arabian embassy in London, that any country supporting the United States action against Libya would be a target for any reprisals, he will take steps to expel Mr. Msallem; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. We asked the Saudi Ambassador for an explanation of Mr. Msallem's remarks. In the light of his response we are satisfied that there are not, at present, sufficient grounds to justify a request for the withdrawal of Mr. Msallem.

Syria (Terrorist Groups)

72. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to Syria about terrorist groups; what response has been received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: On several occasions, particularly during the recent visit to London by the Syrian Foreign Minister, we have made clear to the Syrian Government our concern about terrorism and reported Syrian support for terrorist activity. Mr. Shara' said that Syria condemned terrorism and would not allow the Abu Nidal office in Damascus to engage in military or paramilitary activity.

Abu Nidal

73. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the evidence Her Majesty's Government have of official Government support for, or tacit acceptance of, the presence of members of the Abu Nidal terrorist organisation in their territory; and what action Her Majesty's Government are taking in the light of this evidence against the countries concerned.

Mr. Renton: The Abu Nidal organisation maintains offices in Libya and Syria. The most recent measures taken to counter Libya's sponsorship of international terrorism were described in the statement of my right hon. and learned Friend made on 23 April. He and I expressed our concern about Abu Nidal to the Foreign Minister of Syria during his visit to London in February.

African National Congress

74. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the next meeting to take place between his officials and members of the African National Congress; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: As my right hon. and learned Friend told the house on 9 April, contacts between officials and the ANC are continuing as appropriate. The central purpose of such contact is to bring home to the ANC the importance of a suspension of violence on all sides in South Africa in order to promote a constructive dialogue.

79. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he includes leaders of the African National Congress among the genuine leaders with whom he believes the South African Government should establish a dialogue.

Mrs. Chalker: It is not for us to say who should represent black citizens in South Africa in a dialogue with the South African Government. But the ANC is clearly a most important focus of black opinion.

Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (Report)

75. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to ensure that the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group makes its report in time for the House to debate it before the summer recess.

Mrs. Chalker: It is for the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons to decide when to submit its report.

North Sea Oil (South Africa)

80. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are being taken by Her Majesty's Government to ensure that no North sea oil is reaching South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We have agreed, both within the European Community and the Commonwealth, not to export oil to South Africa. Under guidelines which came into force in 1979, oil from the United Kingdom continental shelf is only exported to EC, International Energy Agency, and certain other countries with which a pattern of trade already exist. South Africa is not one of those countries.

Irish Republican Army

82. **Mr. Leadbitter** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will detail all measures which have been taken against Libya on the grounds that it has supplied the Irish Republican Army with arms; and what evidence he has of links between the Irish Republican Army and other Arab countries and Arab terrorist organisations.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister desdribed the measures we have taken against Libya in her replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) on 24 April. We are aware of speculation about Provisional IRA links with other organisations and countries. Naturally we keep a close eye on this, but it would not be in the public's interest to go into detail.

Conference on Security and Co-operation

83. **Rev. Martin Smyth** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on progress made at the conference on security and co-operation in Europe of experts on human contacts in Berne with particular reference to the removal of obstacles to effective postal and telephone communication between individuals in the signatory states to the Helsinki agreements.

Mr. Renton: Discussion is continuing at Berne on the wide range of subjects covered by the mandate. Obstacles to communication between individuals are a matter of concern to us and we aim to ensure that the issue is adequately dealt with by the conference.

Federal Republic of Germany

87. **Mr. Freeson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to meet the ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany on 12 June.

Immigration

89. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to discuss immigration matters with representatives of diplomatic missions from the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no plans to initiate discussion with them. We are, of course, always happy to see representatives of any diplomatic mission who wish to raise immigration matters.

Iran-Iraq War

90. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent initiatives he has taken to seek to help resolve the Iran-Iraq war.

Mr. Renton: We continue to press for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 582, which was adopted unanimously by the council and offers the best hope of progress in bringing this tragic conflict to an end. In addition we remain in close touch with the UN Secretary General, whose role we strongly support, and with our colleagues within the European Community.

EC (Economic Sanctions)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he now intends to urge his European Economic Council colleagues to apply economic sanctions against Libya, Syria and Iran; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. Our experience shows that economic sanctions are only effective if universally applied. The measures now being taken by the Twelve against Libya, and the Tokyo Summit's statement on terrorism are clear warnings to any country considering involvement in terrorism.

Soviet Nuclear Accident

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government's advice that United Kingdom citizens should not travel to certain locations in Russia is intended to constitute a declaration of public policy in the context of the law of contract; and to which specific Russian locations this advice applies.

Mr. Eggar: The advice is based on the best information available and it is for intending travellers to decide whether to act on it. The relevance of the advice in relation to the law of contract is a matter for the courts. The specific areas in the Soviet Union which travellers currently are being advised to avoid, unless absolutely necessary, are Kiev and the Western Ukraine: Minsk and Byelorussia: and Lithuania.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 8 May 1986

TRANSPORT

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest estimate of the cost of the proposed east London river crossing, indicating the individual figures for *(a)* the bridge over the Thames, *(b)* other structures, *(c)* road construction, *(d)* land and property acquisition and preparation and supervision.

Mr. Ridley: The estimates given to the hon. Member last July are currently being updated. I shall let him have the revised figures as soon as these are available.

Air Service Agreement

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to seek to introduce a standardised air service agreement, to be used as the basis for future negotiations on air services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. I shall continue to take account of all the circumstances when preparing a draft to present to the other party when negotiating a bilateral air services agreement.

Aircraft (Evacuation Times)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if any research has been conducted into evacuation times from narrow bodied, single aisle aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if any research has been conducted into evacuation times from narrow bodied aircraft with different combinations of exits unavailable; and if he will make a statement.

(3) if any research has been conducted into the effect on passenger evacuation times of seating and partition layouts in narrow bodied, single aisle aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Civil aviation safety is the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. I understand from the CAA that evacuation times from narrow body single-aisle aircraft have been researched by British and American manufacturers and summarised by the Aerospace Industries Association of America. Further work has been carried out in the United States of America based upon tests and accident data, including the effects of different combinations of exits being unavailable. Research into the effects of seating and partition layouts, including aisle widths, has been based upon the results of aircraft airworthiness testing and accident data analysis. The authority is currently considering research into the effects of galley layouts and partitions following the accident at Manchester last August.

Milk Floats

Mr. Derek Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation requiring milk floats to be fitted with alarms that emit an audible warning when the vehicle reverses.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Regulations were made last year to permit the use of audible reversing alarms on all goods vehicles over 2 tonnes gross weight. This includes milk floats. I believe it is best that individual operators should decide whether to fit alarms to their vehicles, bearing in mind patterns of operation.

Driving Licences

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 1 May to the hon. Member for Leicester, East, if he will now take steps to collect and maintain information on the number of driving licences lost, stolen or withdrawn on other than medical grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. It would not be cost-effective to do so.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the review of his policy on the control of disturbance from aircraft noise at night at Heathrow and Gatwick airports, announced in the White Paper on "Airports Policy" (Cmnd. 9542).

Mr. Michael Spicer: The report of the further research referred to in the White Paper — "DR Report 8513: Noise Disturbance at Night near Heathrow and Gatwick Airports: 1984 Check Study"—is now available. I have today initiated the consultation process to which the White Paper also referred. The consultant's present report follows on from a major research programme into the relationship between aircraft noise and sleep disturbance.

One of the findings of the report states that our night restrictions policy has resulted in reduced noise exposure and broadly reduced night noise disturbance. That report, of course, forms only one part of the review. The other important component is consultation on all aspects of our night restrictions policy. The views of all those with a direct interest in the operation of aircraft at night at Heathrow and Gatwick — primarily the industry and those it operations affect—are essential.

I am anxious, however, to hear all views to enable me to determine whether the present balance of interests is right or whether it needs updating. I would, therefore, like those whom I am formally consulting to let me have their comments by 15 July.

These comments will be carefully examined and will be taken into account in deciding whether any changes to the current night restrictions policy are appropriate.

I have placed a copy of the study report in the Library of the House.

BAA (Financing Limit)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Transport what account he took of the programme for the completion of the north terminal at Gatwick in setting the external financing limit for the British Airports Authority for 1986-87.

Mr. Ridley: The British Airports Authority's external financing limit of £15 million for 1986-87 was decided last September. It took account of the authority's forecasts of its capital requirements and internal resources, and was thought sufficient to allow the authority to complete Gatwick north terminal in summer 1987, and make good progress on other major projects. The authority has since reduced its forecasts of internal resources and as a result has decided to delay the opening of the Gatwick north terminal. It is for the authority to order its investment priorities. The authority still expects the new terminal to be completed in time for the 1988 summer season.

Compulsory Purchase

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of times, in each of the last five years, that his Department has acquired the main residence of an individual by a compulsory purchase order, the number of cases, in each of the last five years, referred to the Lands Tribunal and the average length of time taken to complete an acquisition.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his replies*, 25 March 1986, c. *418*, and 1 May, c. *483*]: The following paragraph was omitted from the substantive answer.

The Department's records do not differentiate between main and other residences. The average time taken to complete an acquisition could be calculated only at disproportionate cost.

WALES

Spectacles

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospitals in Wales, which do not at present have in-house facilities to dispense spectacles, will have such facilities available by 1 July.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The proposals for the future dispensing of glasses in the hospital eye service have been the subject of a consultation exercise. The response is still being considered and it is too early to confirm the detailed arrangements which will be made for dispensing.

Orthopaedic Surgeons

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many orthopaedic surgeons are employed by each of the health authorities in Wales who carry out hip replacement operations; and how many operations were carried out by each surgeon annually for the past five years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The following table shows, for each district health authority in Wales, the number of orthopaedic surgeons who carried out hip replacement operations in 1984.

Health Authority	*Number of orthopaedic surgeons (including locums)**
Clwyd	6
East Dyfed	4
Pembrokeshire	3
Gwent	5
Gwynedd	3
Mid Glamorgan	8
Powys	—
South Glamorgan	10
West Glamorgan	8
Wales	42

* The figure for Wales is less than the total of the figures for individual health authorities because some consultants carry out operations for more than one health authority.

Questions on the numbers of operations carried out by an individual consultant should be referred to the appropriate health authority.

Radiotherapy Treatment

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide information showing the current ratio of radiotherapy units to patients in each part of Wales; if he will make a statement on the present level of care offered to cancer patients in Wales in general.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Radiotherapy is provided for Welsh patients at two centres in South Wales where the ratio of units to potential patients is approximately 1:1,000,000. As patients from North Wales are treated at a number of units in England it is not possible to provide this information in respect of North Wales. The level of service identified for South Wales above is in accordance with accepted norms.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table indicating the average length of time cancer patients have to wait before receiving radiotherapy treatment in Wales; and if he is satisfied with the present situation in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: During 1985, the latest period for which statistical information is available, the average length of time cancer patients waited before receiving radiotherapy treatment in Wales was 15·1 days for first treatment at Velindre hospital and 5·4 days for first treatment at Singleton hospital.

Information on patients from Wales who receive treatment at units in England is not held centrally.

The Welsh medical committee advisory group on cancer services has recently presented its report on cancer services in Wales and this is presently being studied.

Forms (Bilingual Format)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales which circulars, regular reports or regular forms requiring information, that are sent by the Welsh Office to local authorities in Wales, are printed in a bilingual format.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are 35 bilingual forms or other documents which are regularly sent by the Welsh Office to local authorities in Wales.

Details of these are shown in the following list:

Reference Number	*Title Description*
N1	Ffurflen Ystadegol Ysgolion Meithrin Nursery School Statistical Return
N2	Nursery Schools

Reference Number	*Title Description*
Ystad 1 Y Swyddfa Gymreig Welsh Office Stats 1	Nodiadau Cyfarwyddo: Ysgolion Meithrin Notes for Guidance: Nursery Schools
Ffurflen Ystad 1 Form Stats 1	Ysgolion Meithrin a Chynradd Taflen Ddiweddaru ar Gyfer Tymor y Gwanwyn Nursery and Primary Schools Updating Sheet for Spring Term
N3	Ffurflen Ystadegol Ysgolion Meithrin: Atodiad Tymor Y Gwanwyn Nursery School Statistical Return: Spring Term Supplement
P1	Ffurflen Ystadegol Ysgolion Cynradd Primary School Statistical Return
P2	Taflen Waith Ysgolion Cynradd ar Gyfer Disgyblion Amser Llawn ar y Gofrestr Primary School Worksheet for full time pupils on roll
P3	Taflen waith ar gyfer dadansoddi oed plant rhan-amser mewn ysgolion plant bach ac ysgolion plant iau a phlant bach Working Sheet for Age Analysis of part-time children in infant and junior and infant schools.
Ystad 1 Y Swyddfa Gymreig Welsh Office Stats 1	Nodiadau Cyfar wyddo: Ysgolion Cynradd Notes for Guidance: Primary Schools
P4	Ffurflen ystadegol ysgolion cynradd Atodiad tymor y gwanwyn Primary School Statistical return Spring Term Supplement
P6	Ysgolion Meithrin a chynradd—Disgyblion amser llawn Newid yn y nifer ar y gofestr Nursery and Primary schools—full time pupils Change in number on roll
P6A	Ysgolion Meithrin a chynradd—disgyblion rhan-amser Newid yn y nifer ar y gofrestr Nursery and Primary Schools—part-time pupils Change in number on roll Nodiadau Cyfarwyddo: Ysgolion Cynradd Notes for Guidance: Primary Schools
S1	Ffurflen Ystadegol Ysgolion Uwchradd Secondary School Statistical Return
S2	Ysgolion Uwchradd Taflen Waith ar Gyfer Cyfansymiau Blynyddol Secondary Schools Worksheet for Class Year Totals
S3	Ysgolion Uwchradd—Dadansoddiad o'r Oed yn ôl y flwyddyn Secondary Schools—Age Analysis by Year-in-Schools
Ffurflen Ystad 1 Form Stats 1	Ysgolion Uwchradd Taflen Ddiweddaru ar gyfer tymor y gwanwyn Newid yn y nifer ar y gofrestr Secondary Schools Updating Sheet for Spring Term Change in number on roll
Ystad 1 Y Swyddfa Gymreig	Nodiadau Cyfarwyddo: Ysgolion Uwchradd

Reference Number	*Title Description*
Welsh Office Stats 1	Notes for Guidance: Secondary Schools
S4	Ffurflen Ystadegol Ysgolion Uwchradd Atodiad Tymor y Gwanwyn Secondary School Statistical Return Spring Term Supplement
S6	Ysgolion Uwchradd Newid yn y nifer ar y gofrestr Secondary Schools Change in number on roll *Nodiadau Cyfarwyddo: Ysgolion Uwchradd *Notes for guidance: Secondary Schools
SP1*	Ffurflen Ystadegol Ysgolion Arbennig Special School Statistical Return
SP2*	Taflen Waith Ysgolion Arbennig Special Schools Worksheet
Ystad 1 Y Swyddfa Gymreig Welsh Office Stats 1	Nodiadau Cyfarwyddo: Ysgolion Arbennig Notes for Guidance: Special Schools
SP3	Ffurflen Ystadegol Ysgolion Arbennig Atodiad Tymor y Gwanwyn Special School Statistical Return Spring Term Supplement
SP4	Taflen Waith Ysgolion Arbennig Special Schools Worksheet Nodiadau Cyfarwyddo: Ysgolion Arbennig Notes for Guidance: Special Schools
Ffurflen 7d* Ysgolion Rhan I Form 7d Schools Pt I	Ffurflen am Blant yn gadael yr ysgol yn ystod y Flwyddyn Academaidd 198–/8– Return of School leavers during the Academic Year 198–/8–
Ffurflen 7d* Ysgolion Rhan II Form 7d Schools Pt II	Ffurflen am Blant sy'n gadael yr ysgol yn ystod y Flwyddyn Academaidd 198–/8– Return of School leavers during the Academic Year 198–/8–
Ffurflen 7z* Ysgolion Form 7z Schools	Ffurflen am Ymgeiswyr Arholiadau TAG a TAU yn ystod y Flwyddyn Academaidd 198–/8– Return of Candidates for the GCE and CSE Examinations during the Academic Year 198–/8–
WOPS 1 & 2	Welsh Office Planning Statistics
Ffurfleni BEd* 1, 2 Forms BEd 1, 2	Claim for grant payment under S21 of the Education Act 1980
Ffurflen BEd3* Form BEd3	Annual Statement of expenditure under S21 of the Education Act 1980

Special Education

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the progress that has been made in relation to integration of those with special education needs into ordinary schools and colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It was envisaged by the Warnock committee that full implementation of its recommendations on integration would take at least until the end of this century. Nevertheless, all Welsh local education authorities are now implementing the provisions of the Education Act 1981, although progress will vary between authorities.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in Wales assessed as needing special education were awaiting day places and boarding places at special schools at January 1986, or the latest date at which the information is available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There were 295 awaiting places at January 1985.

Peripatetic Teachers

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing how many full-time peripatetic teachers were working for each local education authority in Wales at January 1986, the number shared with other authorities and the number of part-time peripatetic remedial teachers.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information in respect of peripatetic remedial teachers is not yet available for January 1986. However, the numbers in January 1985 are as follows. None of these teachers was shared with another authority.

	Full-time	*Part-time*
Clwyd	36	29
Dyfed	26	—
Gwent	—	24
Gwynedd	10	—
Mid Glamorgan	78	37
Powys	33	—
South Glamorgan	8	—
West Glamorgan	47	28

Handicapped Children

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing how many children in secondary schools in Wales are recognised by the relevant local education authority as being handicapped; of these how many attend designated special classes or units on a full-time/part-time basis; and how many did not attend designated special classes at January 1986, or the latest date for which the information is available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information in the form requested is not available. Figures to be published shortly in "Statistics of Education in Wales" indicate that the number of pupils who were receiving special education in ordinary or special classes in maintained secondary and primary schools in Wales under the provisions of the Education Act 1981 totalled 6,400.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many handicapped pupils registered in January 1986 with local education authorities in Wales as having a need for special education are attending special schools outside Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information for January 1986 is not yet available. At January 1985, 103 were doing so.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to local education authorities in Wales to ensure that education facilities for mentally handicapped children give due regard to the home language of such children.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is for local education authorities to consider the pattern of education in their area and to determine placements for mentally handicapped children which best suit their educational needs.

Overseas Students

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the number of overseas students enrolled in full-time, part-time and sandwich courses in each of the colleges of further education in Wales as of November 1985.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information for November 1985 is not available. Figures for November 1984 are as follows:

Number of overseas students

	Number
North East Wales Institute of Higher Education	136
Llandrillo Technical College	22
College of Librarianship, Wales	49
Trinity College	22
Newport College of Further Education	10
Gwent College of Higher Education	41
Crosskeys College	13
Ystrad Mynach College of Further Education	14
Polytechnic of Wales	303
South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education	60
Rumney College	58
Barry College of Further Education	54
West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education	122
Neath College	31
Others*	15

* There were eight colleges each with fewer than ten overseas students.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Further Education

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of children remained at *(a)* maintained schools, *(b)* independent schools and *(c)* further education establishments in the academic years 1981-82 to 1984-85 in each local education authority in England, and in England as a whole at 16 years and 17 years.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State gave him on 21 January 1986, at columns *157-64*, for information for the academic years 1979-80 and 1984-85. My hon. Friend will write to the hon. Member with figures for the remaining years on the same basis. Figures for pupils at independent schools cannot be given because information about their local education authority of normal residence is not collected centrally.

Physical Education

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will undertake a fundamental review of the role of physical education within the primary and secondary school curriculum.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Students

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied that existing provisions for university and college students are adequate to ensure that no student who can benefit from such education will be deprived of the opportunity for financial reasons.

Mr. Chris Patten: There are now more students in higher education than ever before and the percentage of young people involved is the highest ever. Moreover, our awards system is more generous than those of other developed countries: no other country provides mandatory grant support at a similar level or devotes as high a proportion of its gross national product to student support as we do.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that the minimum weekly grant income for subsistence purposes of a student aged 18 years and over following a full-time course in education is at least £23·60 per week, and for students aged 16 and 17 years at least £18·20 per week.

Mr. Walden: Students on mandatory and full value discretionary awards currently receive, subject to a means test, £53·70 per week in term time. To extend the grant system so that all students over 18 in England and Wales received £23·60 per week and all students aged 16 and 17 received £18·20 would cost in the region of an additional £480 million per annum.

University Lecturers

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the numbers of university lecturers with a doctor's degree in scientific and mathematics subjects leaving their posts and giving as the reason for their decision higher salaries and better promotion prospects in industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Information in the form requested is not available. In the year ending 31 December 1984 1,269 staff* were lost to universities of which retirement and death accounted for 601. Of the remaining 668, 227 had qualifications in pure science (biology and physical sciences), engineering, mathematics and computer science; and 68 left for posts in industry and commerce.

In the same year universities recruited 997† staff: of these 401 had qualifications in pure science (biology and physical sciences), engineering, mathematics and computer science; and 85 were recruited from industry and commerce.

Notes:

* Non-clinical academic staff, wholly paid from university funds and employed as assistant lecturers, lecturers, senior lecturers, readers and professors in Great Britain universities.

† Excluding 86 who were transferred from short term contracts to the staffing complement.

Source:

Universities Statistical Record.

Super-Computers

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he proposes to seek to impose a ban on all contacts between United Kingdom academics using super-computer facilities at United Kingdom universities and their colleagues in the 19 countries embargoed by the United States of America, and identified as such to his officials, in the new regulation for the use in the United Kingdom of super-computers of United States origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: No.

Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the outcome of the review of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research which he announced on 12 July 1985.

Sir Keith Joseph: In the light of many constructive responses to the Department's consultation, I have written to the chairman of CILT proposing a framework for its work aimed at strengthening its impact, particularly in the schools sector, and inviting him to take specific action to translate this framework into a programme of work. CILT's governing body has considered these proposals and agreed that they should form the basis of the organisation's future activities. Copies of the exchange of correspondence have been placed in the Library.

I am grateful to the chairman and members of the governing body for the time and effort they have given to the work of CILT and to those bodies which responded to the consultation.

Council for Educational Technology

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has yet reached decisions on the Council for Educational Technology following the review of its activities completed in 1985.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have written today to the CET and I am placing a copy of my letter and the review in the House of Commons Library.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Creation

Mr. Lawler asked the Paymaster General how many new jobs have been created in Bradford since December 1982 by people becoming self-employed.

Mr. Lang: I regret that the information requested is not available from the Department's statistics.

For areas smaller than regions, the only source of information on the number of persons who are self-employed is the decennial census of population. The 1981 census identified 17,023 such persons resident in Bradford.

Restart Scheme

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what arrangements the Manpower Services Commission has made to monitor and evaluate the restart scheme.

Mr. Lang: Detailed arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the restart programme have yet to be finalised. However, the Manpower Services Commission will be examining:

(a) what help was provided to long-term unemployed people through counselling

(b) the effectiveness of the new restart courses

(c) the effectiveness of the new jobstart allowance (by independent survey).

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what criteria will be taken into account in judging the success of the restart scheme.

Mr. Lang: Criteria that will be taken into account in judging the success of the restart scheme will include the extent to which long-term unemployed people are helped to make progress towards leaving unemployment either directly into jobs (with or without the help of the jobstart allowance) the community programme or self-employment (for example, using the enterprise allowance scheme), or indirectly by attending job clubs or restart courses to help them improve their job search techniques.

Prison Visitors

Mr. Waller asked the Paymaster General if he will introduce legislation to amend section 29 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 so as to entitle members of boards of prison visitors to take time off during working hours to perform their duties as prison visitors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. I am afraid that increasing the range of circumstances in which employers are obliged by law to give time off could increase the burdens on employers and have an adverse impact on their ability to provide employment. This small change could give rise to pressure for others and I am not aware of any evidence that such legislation is needed to enable boards of prison visitors to fulfil their duties effectively.

Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Chope asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made by the working group on the review of vocational qualifications.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The group's report was submitted to my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Wales, and to the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission, on 23 April. The report is published today, and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House. We are most grateful to the chairman, Mr. H. G. de Ville, and the members of his group for the speed and thoroughness with which they have discharged their remit. We are now urgently considering their recommendations, and will announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Sims asked the Attorney-General if he is satisfied that the Law Society receives sufficient funds to administer the legal aid scheme without undue delay.

The Attorney-General: Yes. The cash limit for legal aid administration for 1986-87 is £24·6 million, an increase of 20 per cent. on the figure for the previous year.

Mr. Sims asked the Attorney-General what information he has as to the average time lapse between a solicitor applying for payment in respect of legal aid work undertaken and payment of fees.

The Attorney-General: Comprehensive information on the time taken to process and pay legal aid bills is not available. However, the Law Society recently undertook a sample survey of bills paid during February 1986 in certain area offices from which the following average figures were derived.

	Weeks
Civil legal aid:	
(a) taxed bills	Five
(b) Regulation 100 bills	Six
Green Form Bills	Four
Assistance by way of Representation bills	Nine
Criminal legal aid in Magistrates' Courts bills	Seven

In all cases these figures represent the length of time from receipt of the bill by the Law Society to authorisation of payment by the area office. In the case of civil legal aid taxed bills the figure does not include the length of time taken on taxation.

Payment of bills relating to criminal legal aid in the higher courts is the responsibility of the courts and not the Law Society. Well over 90 per cent. of these bills are paid within four weeks of the claim being lodged.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Crown Agents

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the 1985 annual report and accounts of the Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations will be published.

Mr. Raison: The 1985 report and accounts are being published tomorrow and copies have been laid before the House. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

United Nations General Assembly

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has yet determined which Ministers will attend the special session on the critical economic situation in Africa of the General Assembly from 27 to 31 May; and for how long.

Mr. Raison [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 April 1986, c. *421*]: The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary plans to attend the United Nations special session on Africa on 28 May. I shall lead the British delegation for the remainder of the time.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Disciplinary Proceedings)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in Wandsworth and Featherstone prisons, respectively, were disciplined for *(a)* assaults on prison officers and *(b)* assaults on other prisoners in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Local Radio

Mr. Temple-Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is considering the publication of a Green paper on local radio.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary announced last year that he proposed

to publish a Green Paper this summer identifying the broadcasting policy issues raised by the forthcoming experiment in community radio, including the possible implications for existing local radio services, and inviting comments on a range of possible responses. When that announcement was made it was envisaged that the experimental community radio stations would by then have been operating for some months. It has since become increasingly clear, partly because of the significance community radio is likely to have for the existing framework for the provision and regulation of radio broadcasting, that it would make good sense for the Green Paper to look not only at community radio, but also at the future of radio services as a whole of which community radio may form a significant part. It has also become clear that if experience of the experiments is to inform the consultative process, then a later date of publication would be needed, and this will also allow reference to be made to the report of the Peacock committee, publication of which is expected in the summer.

Dog Fighting

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement as to what steps he is taking to seek to increase the penalties for those found guilty of offences involving dog fighting.

Mr. Mellor: The Government share the public abhorrence of all acts of cruelty against domestic and captive animals. The sentence to be imposed in any particular case is a matter for the court concerned and not one in which it would be proper for the Government to intervene. We keep under review the maximum level of the penalties provided for offences under the present law, and are looking at the matter again in the context of a Bill proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

News International Plant, Wapping

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost of policing the demonstrations and pickets at the News International plant, Wapping.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers have been injured as a result of incidents in and around the News International plant, Wapping; and what measures have been taken to give protection to police officers assigned to these duties.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Three hundred and four, up to 4 May. The usual protective equipment has been available.

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the impact on crime prevention and detection in London of the recent need to send additional police officers into the Wapping area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The need for officers to be deployed in this way is regrettable and must have an effect on the service which the police are able to provide elsewhere. I understand from the Commissioner that the precise effect on other crime duties is unlikely to be quantifiable.

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers have had to be taken away from their normal duties elsewhere in London to provide support to the local division at Wapping.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that over 350,000 police man hours have been spent at or near the News International plant in connection with the industrial dispute there, but information distinguishing those officers who would otherwise have been on duty elsewhere is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The total number of officers involved in the police operation at Wapping has varied from day to day. On Saturdays (the day on which the largest demonstrations have taken place each week) this has ranged from 268 officers (on 8 February) to 1,870 officers (on 5 April). I understand from the Commissioner that 1,744 officers were deployed at the most recent demonstration on 3 May; of these 1,665 officers were from outside the Newham district.

Pharmacies

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many burglaries of local pharmacies involving the theft of drugs have taken place in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not collected centrally on a regular basis. However, information collected in 1981 from 26 police forces in England and Wales suggested that there were nearly 600 burglaries in pharmacies recorded in these forces involving the loss of controlled drugs ("Reducing Burglary: a Study of Chemists' Shops"—Crime Prevention Unit—Paper 1).

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what special advice on security is issued by his Department or chief officers of police to the owners or operators of local pharmacies.

Mr. Mellor: The requirements for security of drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act are contained in the Misuse of Drugs (Safe Custody) Regulations 1973. No specific guidance on security is issued by the Home Office or the police to persons conducting retail pharmacy businesses, but police crime prevention officers and chemist inspecting officers regularly give advice during their visits to pharmacies. In assessing the adequacy of their security arrangements, retail pharmacists are also urged to take account of the recommendations of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs in its report of 1983 on the security of controlled drugs. If the hon. Member has a specific case causing him concern, I should be pleased to look into it.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Financial Services Bill

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about possible changes to the provisions of the Financial Services Bill relating to self-regulating organisations, or to rules made by a designated agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I have received a large number of representations, in particular about these provisions of the

Financial Services Bill. In response to these representations it is the Government's intention to bring forward at Report stage amendments to give effect to the following changes.

The first change concerns the liability of self-regulating organisations to suit for damages. I have sympathy with a number of the concerns expressed. The organisations might be reluctant to take the necessary disciplinary action against their members if there was a prospect of facing a number of large claims for damages which would be costly and time-consuming to defend. Similar problems could arise when applicants for membership were rejected. I am equally concerned that individuals might be reluctant to serve on the governing bodies of self-regulating organisations or to be employed by them if they too could be sued.

The Government have therefore decided to provide immmunity from actions for damages for self-regulating organisations recognised under the Financial Services Bill. This would be modelled broadly on the immunity which the Bill already confers on the designated agency and on the stock exchange in its capacity as competent authority for listing.

The immunity would apply to recognised self-regulating organisations, to the members of their governing bodies and to their officers and servants. They would not be liable for damages for anything done or omitted in the discharge of the functions of the recognised self-regulating organisation, unless they could be shown to have acted in bad faith.

However, this does not remove all legal remedies, but only the right to claim damages. The right to sue for a declaration setting out the position on any legal issue in dispute or for an injunction restraining an illegal act or requiring the self-regulating organisation to act lawfully will remain.

Although these provisions will limit the right of action through the courts, other remedies will be available. An investor who has suffered loss as a result of a business breaching the rules will be able to sue the business, or claim on the compensation arrangements required to be set up by the Financial Services Bill. A business which claims to have been dealt with unfairly by the self-regulating organisation will be able to invoke its appeal procedure, and if deprived of members it will also be able to apply for direct authorisation from the designated agency.

The second change would give the Secretary of State a power, which he could transfer to a designated agency, to alter the rules of a recognised self-regulating organisation. The power would allow the designated agency to act swiftly, but allow its decision to be challenged by the self-regulating organisation concerned in a way which other decisions under the Bill cannot be. The designated agency would be able to exercise its powers if at any time it believes that an organisation's rules fail to provide investors with protection equivalent to that provided by the agency's own conduct of business rules. This could be either because the organisation had not amended its rules in line with a new rule introduced by the agency or because in changed circumstances the organisation's rules no longer provide equivalent protection. The agency would have to consult the organisation before imposing a rule change on it, but there would be no minimum period of consultation.

If a rule change were imposed, it would then be open to the organisation concerned to challenge the agency's actions in the courts. It could do so either on the basis that the organisation's original rules did in fact provide the requisite level of investor protection; or on the basis that, while some change was agreed to be necessary, the requisite level of investor protection would have been achieved by an alternative rule proposed by the organisation. If the court were satisfied on either ground it could set aside the agency's alteration and substitute any alteration proposed by the organisation. The agency's rule, however, would continue to apply while this appeal process was being pursued. I believe that this proposal adequately meets the concerns which have been expressed on all sides.

The third change concerns the agency's own rules, against which the rules of the self-regulating organisations will be measured. The Securities and Investmens Board is already engaged in widespread consultation on draft rules, and its eventual proposals will be submitted to me. If I then transfer powers to the board, but it subsequently wishes to alter those proposals, it will now be required by the Financial Services Bill to undertake consultation. In this way the self-regulating organisations and other people affected will be able to comment on the agency's rules as they develop to meet changing circumstances.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Balance of Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what effect the exchange rate has had on the United Kingdom balance of trade in manufactures since the first quarter of 1979; and if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing exports of manufacturers as a percentage of imports for trade with the United States, the European Economic Community and West Germany together with the relative export prices in each case for each year since 1970 and the current year to date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The balance of trade in manufactures depends upon many factors in addition to sterling exchange rates. The depreciation in the latter since 1979 has had a positive effect on the balance.

The statistical information requested is in the following table.

	*United Kingdom Export-Import Ratios**			*United Kingdom Relative Export Prices†*		
	USA	*EC(10)*	*FR Germany*	*USA*	*EC(10)*	*FR Germany*
1970	86	131	81	69	89	86
1971	114	119	72	72	89	87
1972	122	101	60	77	87	84
1973	110	88	50	76	80	75
1974	89	85	47	76	79	75
1975	87	88	57	77	82	79
1976	92	91	58	70	80	75

	United Kingdom Export-Import Ratios*			United Kingdom Relative Export Prices†		
	USA	EC(10)	FR Germany	USA	EC(10)	FR Germany
1977	90	91	58	77	84	79
1978	94	83	54	87	88	81
1979	85	80	52	91	92	88
1980	70	89	61	100	100	100
1981	76	81	60	83	107	110
1982	75	74	51	73	101	101
1983	84	66	44	68	100	99
1984	84	68	49	64	101	104
1985	96	70	50	64	102	106e
1986‡	110	64	46	n/a	n/a	n/a

* United Kingdom exports of manufactures (fob) divided by United Kingdom imports of manufactures (cif) expressed as a percentage.
† United Kingdom export unit value index for manufactures divided by the indices for the other countries named, all expressed in common currency.
‡ First Quarter.
n/a =not available.
Sources: United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics; United Nations.

Monopolies and Mergers

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if in conducting his review of monopolies and mergers policy, he will consider whether companies mounting takeover bids should be prohibited from offering for public sale subsidiaries of their targets.

Mr. Howard: In assessing whether a merger or merger proposal should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for further investigation the Director General of Fair Trading and, subsequently, my right hon. Friend, take into account all aspects of the merger, including any future plans of the parties such as disposals. Each case is considered individually, on its own merits, and there is no presumption that such proposals are objectionable.

US (Trade Talks)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will make a statement outlining the further restrictions which were placed on the import of agricultural products from the United States of America to Spain and Portugal in consequence of the Accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Economic Community; and what estimate he has made of the value of the trade affected by these restrictions;

(2) if either Her Majesty's Government or the European Economic Community Commission sought the opinion of the general agreement on tariffs and trade on whether the imposing of quotas on oilseed imports to Portugal from the United States of America and the requirement that Portugal purchases 15·5 per cent. of its grain from the European Economic Community, in consequence of the Accession of Portugal to the European Economic Community, were consistent with the terms and obligations of that Agreement prior to the imposition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The accession to the Community of Spain and Portugal will lead, over a transitional period, to the progressive adoption by both countries of the Community's common customs tariff and the common agricultural policy. As a result, restrictions imposed by Spain and Portugal on trade with countries outside the Community will be reduced in some cases and increased in others. The details are set out in the Treaty of Accession, a copy of which is in the Library.

The GATT permits such adjustments where they arise out of the formation or enlargement of a customs union provided that the resulting protection is not on the whole higher or more restrictive than before. The GATT also provides for the negotiation of compensation to trading partners when this condition is not met.

The Community is fully satisfied that the enlargement arrangements comply with GATT commitments. The Community was not required to seek the opinion of the GATT secretariat. The GATT provides procedures which should be used for the investigation and settlement of any disputes which arise.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of his recent talks with United States Trade Ministers.

Mr. Channon: I discussed a wide range of trade issues with members of the United States Administration, including objectives for the new GATT round and the current dispute between the Economic Community and United States over the enlargement of the European Community.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the European Economic Community is seeking to negotiate compensation to the United States of America in respect of the loss of trade rights and injury to the United States of America stemming from the levies placed on corn and sorghum imports from the United States of America to Spain in consequence of Spain's accession to the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Community began negotiations with the United States in Geneva on 2 May to establish, in accordance with the provisions of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, what compensation if any is due. Meanwhile, the United States Administration have complained about some aspects of enlargement and threatened to take unilateral action not in accordance with GATT procedures against Community exports. The Community is seeking to dissuade the Administration from any such action. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry reinforced this message in Washington last week and made it clear that the Community would have to respond in kind to any United States action.

ECGD (Bank Guarantee Scheme)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements have been made by the Export

Credits Guarantee Department with the London and Scottish clearing banks, as represented by the Export and Shipbuilding Finance Committee, concerning the past operation of the comprehensive bank guarantee (open account) scheme and in particular, deficit payments and interest subsidies payable to the banks under the scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: Under the comprehensive bank guarantee (open account) scheme, a bank makes advances against an exporter's own promissory notes to finance his exports made on an open account or similar basis. Repayment by the exporter of those advances is guaranteed by the Export Credits Guarantee Department. No interest subsidies are payable to the bank under this scheme.

As my right hon. Friend the then Minister of Trade announced on 24 October last, at column 200, the scheme is being phased out by 31 October 1987. This decision was reached after consulting users and other interested parties, including the clearing banks.

Computers (Government Support)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he proposes to take to ensure that the owners of computers already installed in the United Kingdom continue to receive the hardware and software support for which the suppliers contracted, in cases where the Government of the supplier country is seeking to attach conditions to the provision of such support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department is willing to take up such cases with supplier country authorities as necessary.

London University (Computer)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in full and place in the Library the conditions which the United States Government is seeking to impose in return for supplying a super-computer to London university; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I see no need to place in the Library a copy of proposals relating to a commercial contract.

PRIME MINISTER

Greenock and Port Glasgow

Q21. **Dr. Godman** asked the Prime Minister if she plans to visit Greenock and Port Glasgow in the near future.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

United States Bases

Q91. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what plans she has to update the Attlee-Truman agreements on United States bases in Britain.

The Prime Minister: None. The Government are satisfied with the existing understandings which, as recent events have demonstrated, work well.

EC (Intergovernmental Agreement)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether the 1984 European Economic Community intergovernmental agreement was registered with the United Nations secretariat under article 102 of the United Nations Charter; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. The responsibility for registering the 1984 intergovernmental agreement with the United Nations lies with the Council Secretariat.

IRA (United States Donations)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what is her estimate of the amount of money collected for the Irish Republican Army in the United States during the Reagan Administration.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) on 28 April at column *291*.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Prime Minister if she will list those Government measures of particular help for small businesses since 1979.

The Prime Minister: Measures introduced since 1979 to help small firms include the business expansion scheme which increases the supply of finance for investment in unquoted companies, the loan guarantee scheme which has recently been extended for a further three years and the enterprise allowance scheme which assists unemployed people to start up their own business and has been extended to provide 86,000 places in 1986-87 and 100,000 in each of the following two years. In addition, we have just launched a small firms merit award for research and technology (SMART) as a pilot scheme to stimulate innovation in small firms.

The Manpower Services Commission provides a range of small business training courses at a cost of £20 million in 1986-87.

Advice and counselling services have been greatly extended through the Government's small firms service and development of local enterprise agencies which now number more than 300. Under the local enterprise agency grant scheme, £2·5 million is available in 1986-87 to support such agencies in England.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Prime Minister if she will list those Government measures of particular help to small business which are the subject of current legislation or are planned.

The Prime Minister: The Finance Bill will include a number of tax changes helping small firms, including the indefinite extension and improvement of the business expansion scheme and more favourable tax arrangements for recipients of the enterprise allowance. Also the Department of Trade and Industry has announced that later this year it will introduce an advisory service to help small and medium sized firms to improve their marketing.

Terrorism

Mr. Amess asked the Prime Minister if the Government are considering the formation of a formal multinational counter-terrorist unit both at an intelligence and commando level.

The Prime Minister: We are not considering the formation of such a unit. We believe the most effective and practical way in which to counter international terrorism is through closer co-operation between Governments and their police forces and security authorities. Considerable progress has been made recently to this end both with our European Community partners and with other like-minded countries.

Mr. Murphy asked the Prime Minister if she will make a response on behalf of Her Majesty's Government to the initiative by the president of the Western European Union Assembly for a European Group to co-ordinate the fight against terrorism.

The Prime Minister: I welcome the interest shown by the president of the Western European Union Assembly in combating the scourge of terrorism. As my hon. Friend will know, the actions of European Governments against terrorism are being co-ordinated amongst the Twelve. This forum includes all WEU member states and ensures the widest possible co-ordination of the European response to the terrorist outrage.

Libya

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether the Government will pay compensation to the families of British citizens allegedly killed in the middle east in reprisal for the American attack on Libya.

The Prime Minister: I regret that this is not possible. It has never been the practice of the British Government to make such payments. The murder of British citizens by terrorists is a matter of very deep regret, but we will not be deterred by threats of reprisals from our efforts to combat terrorism.

Seed Certification Standards

Mr. Steel asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the co-ordination of the policies of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the Secretary of State for Scotland in respect of the different interpretation of European Economic Community seed certification standards in England and Scotland.

The Prime Minister: There is no difference within Great Britain in the interpretation of EEC seed regulations and the departmental certifying authorities north and south of the border work to a common set of statutory prescribed standards.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 May.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 May.

Mr. Flannery asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 May.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.

Ionising Radiations

Mr. Dobson asked the Prime Minister which Minister is responsible for the health aspects of ionising radiations.

The Prime Minister: General responsibility for the health of the population in England rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. The Secretary of State for the Environment and Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have specific responsibilities for air, water and food. In discharging these responsibilities, they receive medical advice from the Government's Chief Medical Officer. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, all responsibilities rest with the appropriate Secretary of State.

Nuclear Fallout

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Prime Minister if, pursuant to the reply of 6 May to the hon. Member for Stockton North, she will specify the precise documentary forms in which the emergency plans and procedures for dealing with the threat from nuclear fallout exist; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Information and advice on the response to nuclear emergencies in peacetime and in war is contained in the "Emergency Planning Guidance to Local Authorities", a copy of which is in the Library. Information is also issued by the Health and Safety Executive in its booklet "Emergency Plans for Civil Nuclear Installations".

More detailed plans and procedures are formulated and held at local level.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Prime Minister if she will take steps to make available to members of the public a document containing the Government's advice as to the precautions and protective measures to be taken when the threat of nuclear fallout, whether from civil or military sources, is imminent or present; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is preparing general public information material about civil defence which will be issued later this year. As to peacetime incidents, the Government will give detailed advice in response to any specific incident that may occur, and I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Secretary of State for the Environment's statement on 6 May at column 21.

London University (Computer)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister who will be responsible for vetting and monitoring academic end users of the proposed London university super-computer; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The question of conditions governing access to United States super-computers to be used for academic research in the United Kingdom is to be discussed with the United States authorities.

Top Salaries Review Body (Report)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister when she expects to receive the Top Salaries Review Body report; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received the report of Top Salaries Review Body. An announcement will be made in due course.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Prime Minister why, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), *Official Report*, 18 April, column *525*, on plutonium use, Her Majesty's Government's policy in answering such questions has altered since 4 February 1983.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to the answer*, 6 May 1986, c. *3*]: It is the convention that Ministers are answerable in Parliament only for matters falling within the period of responsibility of the Administration of which they are members.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Prime Minister if she will describe the role of each Department concerned in the United Kingdom nuclear weapons programme.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to the answer*, 6 May 1986, c. *3*]: The Ministry of Defence is concerned with the research and development, procurement, production, deployment, safety and maintenance of nuclear weapons. The Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are jointly responsible for the nuclear element of British defence policy. Additionally, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in consultation with the Ministry of Defence, is responsible for arms control issues, including those concerning nuclear weapons. Other Departments are indirectly involved in the course of fulfilling their normal administrative functions.

SCOTLAND

Soviet Nuclear Accident

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking regularly to monitor radioactivity levels in the light of the Chernobyl incident; what steps he has taken to inform and protect the public in the present situation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: In addition to the continuous regular monitoring which is carried out by the National Radiological Protection Board, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, the nuclear site operators and the regulatory bodies, additional monitoring has been taking place in Scotland of milk samples from the following locations, ranging from the south of Scotland to Shetland. Monitoring began on 3 May and is now taking place at:

Aberdeen
Campbeltown
Castle Douglas
Cumnock
Dalbeattie
Dumfries (two locations)
Edinburgh
Fenwick
Glasgow
Grantown-on-Spey
Mauchline
Nairn
Orkney
Shetland
Stornoway
Stranraer

Monitoring of the deposition of radioactive materials on grass, to estimate possible uptake by cattle, is being carried out in the south-west of Scotland, in four districts in the Dumfries and Galloway region and at Chapelcross. Samples are also being taken at Nairn and at Dounreay.

Analysis of water sampled over the weekend from reservoirs near Dumfries, in the Highland region and at Milngavie, indicated extremely low levels of iodine-131, within the range of 2-9 becquerels per litre. These are less than 1 per cent. of the level of 2,400 becquerels per litre at which action needs to be considered. At the request of the Scottish Office, all water authorities have sent further samples for analysis from a variety of sources used for public water supplies—reservoirs, lochs and rivers. The results from the first 15 of these again all show radioactivity levels well below 1 per cent. of the trigger levels. All but two are less than 4 becquerels per litre, with the other two less than 15. This confirms the advice previously given that water from such sources is safe to drink.

Air sampling is being carried out at the nuclear establishments at Dounreay, Chapelcross, Torness, and Hunterston, and also at Rosyth, Peterhead power station and Lerwick.

Scottish office officials have also been in regular touch with officials of the National Radiological Protection Board and MAFF and other Departments have had access to the results of all monitoring carried ou by the board in England and Scotland.

Samples are being taken of vegetables grown in Scotland to ascertain radioactivity levels. My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for local government and the environment issued a statement on Friday, 2 May in which he drew attention to the monitoring of milk. He advised the public that milk supplies were safe to drink, but that information would be given if any abnormal radiation levels were detected: on Monday 5 May a further statement was issued by the Minister that, while radiation levels had risen during the weekend, the advice given on safety of milk remained valid.

Further statements reinforcing and amplifying this advice were given on 6 and 7 May. My hon. Friend also emphasised, in his statement of 5 May that water supplies from mains, springs, wells and streams had been affected to an insignificant extent.

The latest monitoring results available indicate that radioactivity levels of Iodine 131 in milk from samples analysed on 6 May ranged from 1 becquerel per litre in Shetland to 225 becquerel per litres in the Dalbeattie area. First results for samples analysed on 7 May ranged from 3 becquerel-litre in Shetland to 120 becquerel-litre in the Stranraer area.

Iodine 131 in analysis of rainwater samples indicate a strong downward trend in radioactivity levels in precipitation, which will be reflected in levels in public supplies in due course. The trend in concentration of Iodine 131 in air and grass samples has also shown a strong downward trend over the last few days.

Port environmental health officers have been advised that any consignments of fresh products (including

vegetables, fruit, fish from Russian or Polish coastal waters and dairy products) exported from Russia or Poland on or after 26 April should be held for testing.

The Scottish Office arranged comprehensive briefings for the press on Tuesday 6 May and Wednesday 7 May, and has established a public information line at St. Andrew's House. The number of telephone inquiries has been running at the rate of about 100 an hour since the public information room opened on Tuesday 6 May. This service will be kept in operation as long as the demand requires.

Results of monitoring to date indicate that radioactivity in rainwater is falling, but the advice given by the NRPB on 5 May that fresh rainwater should not be drunk continuously should be followed for the present. This does not apply to water supplied from other sources.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, in his statement to the House on 6 May, set out the overall effects the radioactivity from Chernobyl on the United Kingdom and the measures taken in response to them. So far as Scotland is concerned, the general pattern as regards deposition of radioactivity has been similar to that in the northern parts of England and we do not expect the radioactive cloud to constitute a risk to the health of individuals. Monitoring will continue and the results be made available to the public and the House.

Asbestos

31. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how he proposes to monitor the use made by licensing authorities of their powers under part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 in relation to the disposal in esturial waters of asbestos-contaminated material; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on 14 April, at columns *262-63*.

Woodlands

32. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on recent developments in the promotion of woodlands and broadleaf trees.

Mr. John Mackay: On 24 July 1985 my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) announced the Government's new policy on broadleaves. This was followed by the introduction of the broadleaved woodland grant scheme by the Forestry Commission on 1 October 1985. More than 800 applications for entry to the scheme have already been approved, and we can expect to see a significant increase in the planting of broadleaves.

On 24 March 1986 my right hon. and learned Friend announced revised criteria to be followed by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland in clearing farm land for forestry. From the agricultural point of view, this will mean that substantially more land will be potentially available for tree planting in Scotland.

Fair Wages Resolution

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated number of jobs which have been created in Scotland as a direct result of the abolition of the fair wages resolution.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There is no information on the number of jobs created in Scotland as a result of the abolition of the fair wages resolution.

Earnings

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the latest estimates of the number of part-time female and male workers and *(b)* the estimated proportion of part-time male workers in Scotland being paid less than (i) £3 an hour and (ii) £2 an hour in April 1985.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There were estimated to be 410,000 part-time female employees in employment in December 1985. No comparable estimates are made for part-time male employees, and the latest estimate is 60,000 at the census of employment in September 1981. No detailed information is available on the earnings of part-time male employees.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish *(a)* a table showing the proportion of full-time employees in Scotland who, in the New Earnings Survey 1985, are paid less than £50, £60, £70, £80, £90, £100, £110 and £120 a week, respectively, when overtime earnings are included and *(b)* a table showing the proportion of full-time employees in the same area who are paid less than £110 and £120 when overtime earnings are excluded, for all males and females, and sub-divided into non-manual and manual males and females.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is given in the tables.

(a) Percentage of employees with earnings, including overtime, less than:

£	per cent.
50	0·2
60	0·9
70	2·9
80	7·1
90	12·8
100	19·6
110	26·8
120	34·4

(b) Percentage of employees with earnings, excluding overtime, less than:

	£110	£120
Males		
All	20·7	28·6
Manual	28·9	40·0
Non-manual	9·7	13·1
Females		
All	54·5	65·8
Manual	76·7	86·3
Non-manual	47·2	59·0

The information in both tables relates to full-time employees on adult rates in April 1985, whose pay was not affected by absence during the survey pay period.

Young Workers

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of young workers in Scotland who *(a)* are currently covered by the YTS, *(b)* are currently covered

by the young workers scheme subsidy and *(c)* are expected to be covered by the new workers scheme subsidy by the end of 1986.

Mr. Allan Stewart: At the end of March 1986, the latest date for which information is available, there were 31,487 young people in Scotland in training under YTS; currently there are 5,403 covered by the young workers scheme. It is estimated that some 10,000 young workers will be supported under the new workers scheme in Scotland by the end of 1986, but take-up will depend on employers' willingness to participate.

Matrimonial Interdicts

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many matrimonial interdicts with powers of arrest attached have been delivered to the eight police forces in Scotland in terms of section 15(4) of the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981 since its introduction on 1 September 1982 in total, to each force and in each year; and how many of the interdicts with attached powers of arrest have been recalled or terminated by divorce.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers of matrimonial interdicts to which the power of arrest was attached that were notified to police forces in Scotland in the period 1982 to 1985 were as follows:

Force	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Central Scotland	13	20	37	30
Dumfries and Galloway	Nil	4	5	7
Fife	2	15	33	34
Grampian	12	17	36	63
Lothian and Borders	15	40	96	154
Northern	8	16	20	34
Strathclyde	38	151	262	410
Tayside	*	*	*	*

* Figures not available for these years; but the number of interdicts currently in force is 147.

The reason for the recall of an interdict is not always given to the police, but available information is as follows:

Force	*Number of recalls since 1982*
Central Scotland	Twelve (in period from 1984 — earlier details not available): reasons unspecified
Dumfries and Galloway	No recalls notified
Fife	One: reason unspecified
Grampian	Sixteen, of which six were by reason of divorce
Lothian and Borders	Forty-one: reasons unavailable
Northern	Nine, of which two were due to divorce
Strathclyde	Ninty-one in period to 30 April 1986: reasons unavailable
Tayside	Figures not available

Atmospheric Radiation

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the levels of radioactivity in the atmosphere as monitored at locations within Highland region, Orkney and Shetland on each of 3, 4 and 5 May.

Mr. Ancram: Regular monitoring of radioactivity levels in air is undertaken at the Dounreay site of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. Results for Iodine 131 on 3, 4, and 5 May were 0·3 Becquerels per cubic metre, 1·7 Becquerels per cubic metre and 0·06 Becquerels per cubic metre respectively. Arrangements have been made for an air sample from Lerwick to be analysed, but the result is not yet available.

DEFENCE

Civilian Patients

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Defence what advice is available to civilian patients receiving treatment in military hospitals as to their rights to seek redress of grievances through the legal system if dissatisfied with the treatment received.

Mr. Lee: Arrangements have been made to publicise the complaints procedures more widely by issuing an explanatory booklet to patients. Advice on legal procedures can be obtained from the military hospitals or the Ministry of Defence.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for Defence for what purpose soldiers serving in the Ulster Defence Regiment are required to report the numbers and expiry dates of their passports.

Mr. Lee: The requirement for UDR personnel to report the number and expiry date of their passport is designed to provide a record that they are in possession of a current passport in view of the possibility that they may need to be sent overseas for short periods of training. All Army units are subject to the same requirement.

Northern Ireland

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about operations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanley: Military operations are being carried out, in support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary's fight against terrorism, by the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. The Army element currently comprises 10 Regular battalions and 9 battalions of the Ulster Defence Regiment. A major contribution is also being made by various support elements, including the Royal Engineers.

The figures given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 1 May in reply to my hon. Friends the Members for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) and for Billericay (Mr. Proctor), at column 1091, reflect both the effectiveness of these operations and the skill, professionalism and commitment of all elements of the security forces in carrying out their difficult and dangerous duties.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government have been asked by the United States Administration to sign a memorandum of agreement or understanding regarding the location of United States cruise missiles in Britain.

Mr. Stanley: The Government's decision on the location of ground-launched cruise missiles at RAF Greenham common and RAF Molesworth was announced to the House by the then Secretary of State for Defence on 17 June 1980. Detailed arrangements are set out, in a classified memorandum of understanding, which was a requirement of both Governments.

Type 2400 Submarine

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether there is an ordering pattern for the procurement of the new type 2400 diesel-electric Upholder class conventional submarine;

(2) what is the current projected timetable for the replacement of existing conventionally powered submarines by and with the T2400 Upholder class diesel-electric submarine; and whether it is still on schedule;

(3) if he still intends to replace existing Oberon class and Porpoise class conventional submarines with the T2400 diesel-electric Upholder class submarine.

Mr. Lee: It has been stated on previous occasions that the highly capable Upholder class of conventional diesel-electric powered submarines is planned to replace the older Oberon class. An order was placed in January for the first three follow-on vessels of this class. As I said on 16 January, at column *642*, although no decisions have yet been taken on the timing of future orders for this class, I would hope that these orders would be placed in the early 1990s.

ALARM Missile

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there is any delay in the development of the rocket system of the ALARM missile.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Yes. Some technical difficulties have been encountered, and the air weapons division of British Aerospace, as the prime contractor for the ALARM programme, is considering urgently how the problems might best be overcome.

Royal Ordnance plc

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much revenue he expects the share flotation of Royal Ordnance plc is likely to yield to the Exchequer.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The price obtainable will depend on a number of factors, such as the trading record and stock market conditions, at the time of the sale.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the prospectus to be issued in line with the Government's intention to privatise the royal ordnance factories will contain a profit forecast for the next financial year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On the assumption that a prospectus for Royal Ordnance is issued in mid-1986, a profit forecast for the next financial year would refer to calendar year 1987. It would be most unusual for any company to make a public profit forecast that far ahead and it is not expected that Royal Ordnance would do so.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to publish the prospectus offering for sale shares in Royal Ordnance plc.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government hope that the sale of Royal Ordnance could take place in mid-1986, but no date has yet been fixed.

End-user Certificates

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Defence what safeguards are taken to seek to ensure that end-user certificates for the export of small arms and ammunition are genuine.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have been asked to reply.

It would not be in the public interest to publish details of safeguards adopted in respect of end-user certificates or other documents which may be required in support of export licence applications.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Incident Statistics (RUC and Army Personnel)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report*, a table showing, separately, for the year 1985, the number of incidents involving *(a)* Army personnel, *(b)* Royal Ulster Constabulary personnel and *(c)* both Army and Royal Ulster Constabulary personnel under the following headings (i) assaults, (ii) cases involving the use of firearms, (iii) traffic offences and (iv) others.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. The only available information relating to convictions in Northern Ireland of members of the Army and Royal Ulster Constabulary is as follows:

Offence	*Number of Convictions**	
	Royal Ulster Constabulary	*Army*
Assault	5	37
Involving use of firearms	2	11
Traffic	80	338
Other	9	n/a

* In some instances an individual was convicted of more than one offence arising out of the same incident.

Civil Servants

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether Her Majesty's Government will publish the percentage of Northern Ireland civil servants *(a)* who were schooled outside Northern Ireland and *(b)* about whom no schooling classification could be ascertained despite being educated within Northern Ireland;

(2) whether Her Majesty's Government will now provide a disaggregated breakdown of all civil servants recruited and promoted, on the basis of *(a)* since the inception of the schooling question and *(b)* thenceforward annually.

Dr. Boyson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire East, (Mr. MacKay) on 10 February 1986, at columns 325-26.

Recruitment and promotion have been included in the monitoring arrangements, and when the results become available, these will be published in monitoring reports, which it is intended should be published annually.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether Her Majesty's Government are willing to permit transferability on a voluntary basis

between the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Home Civil Service in the same way as is presently permitted between Departments within the Home Civil Service.

Dr. Boyson The Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Home Civil Service are separate services under the Crown. Although there are no formal arrangements for transfers between them, officers of either service can be attached to the other service on a temporary basis. A permanent transfer may be arranged on compassionate grounds where there are compelling welfare circumstances.

Intimidation

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many acts of intimidation have been reported since 1 January; in which cases these acts were against Protestants and in which cases against Catholics, showing what organisation was responsible where this is known; and how many people the incidents involved.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many acts of intimidation have been reported since 1 January that involved more than 10 people, specifying against whom the acts were perpetrated, what damage there was to property, what injuries there were, and whether the injured were Catholic or Protestant.

Mr. Scott: The information sought is not available.

ENERGY

Electricity Prices

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Energy by how much electricity prices have been raised in the latest five-year period; how this compares with the 1974-79 period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Between 1974 and 1979 the current price index for domestic electricity rose by 147 per cent. and that for industrial electricity by 116 per cent. In the latest five-year period for which data are available on a comparable basis—1980 to 1985—the corresponding figures were 43 per cent. and 32 per cent.

Windscale Plant (Fire)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what was the date and time of the commencement of the fire at the Windscale nuclear plant in 1957;

(2) what was the date and time at which the fire at the Windscale plant in 1957 was made public;

(3) when the full official report into the Windscale nuclear plant fire in 1957 was published;

(4) if he will place in the Library a copy of the full report into the Windscale fire in 1957.

Mr. Goodlad: The reports "Accident at Windscale No. 1 pile on 10th October 1957," Cmnd. 302, and "Final report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister to make a technical evaluation of information relating to the design and operation of the Windscale piles, and to review the factors involved in the controlled release of Wigner energy," Cmnd. 471, were presented to Parliament in November 1957 and July 1958, respectively. The former says that temperatures were increasing during 9 and 10 October 1957, and at 16.30 on 10 October visual inspection revealed uranium cartridges at red heat. The UKAEA advises me that a statement was issued by it at 13.00 on 11 October 1957, and that further statements were issued on 12, 13, 14 and 15 October.

Bradwell Nuclear Power Station

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when the metal corrosion in Bradwell nuclear power station reactor cores was first observed;

(2) when the metal corrosion in Bradwell nuclear power station reactor core was first made public;

(3) when the full report into the corrosion in the reactor at Bradwell nuclear power station was published;

(4) if he will place in the Library a copy of the full report of the inquiry into metal corrosion in Magnox reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: I have asked the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to write to the hon. Member.

Dungeness Power Station

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the accidental discharge of radioactive gas from Dungeness power station on 3 March 1986; and if he is satisfied with the publicity arrangements that are made for such incidents.

Mr. Goodlad: As I have informed my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), I am advised by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate for the Health and Safety Executive that approximately 100 lb of slightly contaminated carbon dioxide was released following overheating of the pre-heater of a small separate plant which is attached to the Dungeness A power station for the purpose of treating carbon dioxide cooling gas.

The amount of radiation released in this incident (estimated at less than 25 micro-curies of sulphur 35) is only one sixtieth of the station's typical actual daily release of sulphur 35, itself regarded by the radiochemicals inspectorate as negligible, already permitted under the authorisation issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment. Typically such authorisations to stations of this type permit daily releases 10,000 times the amount released in this incident, although, of course, operators are required to keep releases as low as reasonably achievable. The incident caused no injury to or contamination of anyone on or off the site, and no danger to the reactor. The incident was, therefore, not formally reportable under the incident reporting arrangements announced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) on 26 July 1982, although the NII and my Department were notified. It was also agreed as part of those arrangements that the NII and the operators at each site should inform the local population about any incidents which might have consequences outside the site. I am satisfied with the arrangements.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the nuclear reactors in Britain *(a)* with secondary containment and *(b)* without secondary containment.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised that secondary containments are not considered necessary, given all the other safety features, including the massive and very strong primary pressure containments, at the existing gas cooled, Magnox and AGR nuclear power stations.

However, secondary containment is an integral feature of the design of the steam generating heavy water reactor at Winfrith, and the Prototype fast reactor at Dounreay.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy when the Central Electricity Generating Board last made a safety assessment of a nuclear reactor of a type akin to that at Chernobyl; and when it was published.

Mr. Goodlad: I have asked the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to write to the hon. Member.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Pension Plans

Mr. Heddle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he proposes to make a statement on the eligibility of building societies to market personal pension plans.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) on 7 May at columns *132-33*.

Gross Domestic Product

Sir David Price asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each year from 1978 the percentage of gross domestic product represented by public sector activities and also the percentage represented by national and local taxation including national insurance contributions.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is as follows:

percentages of GDP

	*Public sector activities**	*Taxes including national insurance contributions and royalties†*
1978	28	34
1979	27	35
1980	29	36
1981	30	38
1982	29	39
1983	28	39
1984	26	39
1985	n.a.	39

By convention, * is given as percentage of income GDP (at factor cost) † as percentage of GDP at market price.

"Public sector activities" represent the public sector's contribution to the national income, and exclude (for example) all transfers between the public sector and private sector.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Foreign Ministers Meeting

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting of Foreign Ministers in Venice on 29-30 April under the auspices of the Western European Union.

Mr. Eggar: I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of the communiqué issued after the meeting of WEU Foreign and Defence Ministers on 29-30 April at Venice. In fulfilment of the undertaking I gave in answer to my hon. Friend's question of 26 February I will shortly place in the Library of the House a copy of a report on the work of the Western European Union following the Rome declaration of October 1984.

Nigeria

Mr. Thornton: asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to urge the Nigerian Government to authorise the release and payment funds held in Nigeria which are owed to British subjects who were formerly employed by companies based in Nigeria; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We take every suitable opportunity to remind the Nigerian authorities of the problem of personal remittances. Latterly, it was raised when my right hon. and learned Friend visited Lagos in September 1985 and during the Nigerian Foreign Minister's visit to Britain in January. The British High Commission in Lagos regularly pursues individual claims.

Fatah Supreme Military Council

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from Her Majesty's ambassador in Amman about the meeting there on 28 April of the recently created Fatah Supreme Military Council, in opposition to Yasir Arafat, under the chairmanship of Atallah Muhammad Atallah; and what degree of Arab support this organisation is believed to have.

Mr. Renton: We have noted this meeting and Mr. Arafat's criticism of it, but have no evidence of the degree of Arab support for the new organisation.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which European Economic Community countries are fishing in Falkland waters; and what payments are being made by them.

Mr. Eggar: Vessels registered in Spain and Italy fish in Falklands waters: in addition, two British companies are involved in joint fishing ventures with companies from non-EEC states. Fees are payable in respect of harbour facilities and, with effect from 1 April, for trans-shipping and exporting operations carried out in Berkeley sound and territorial waters.

Agricultural Produce (Import Ban)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to establish from the EEC Commission why the ban on imports of fruit, vegetables, meat and other agricultural produce from most Eastern bloc countries was not applied to East Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The EC Commission has proposed that a temporary ban on the import of certain foodstuffs should apply to those countries falling within an approximate radius of 1000 km of Chernobyl, namely the USSR, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia. The measure is not aimed against nor

designed to exempt any particular country or region. It is a short term precautionary measure which would, if agreed, run until 31 May, subject to review both as regards country and product coverage in the light of the latest available scientific evidence.

Guatemala

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with Guatemala.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr. Atkinson) on 28 April at column *291*.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Pensions and Prices

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the percentage increase in the state retirement pensions and the pensioners' price index since: *(a)* 1983, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1974 and *(d)* 1970.

Mr. Major: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage increase

*Date**	*Retirement pension†*		*Pensioners' price index‡*	
	Single	*Couple*	*One-person household*	*Two-person household*
November 1970	666·0	656·8	412·3	410·0
July 1974	283·0	283·1	244·8	242·0
November 1979	64·4	64·3	56·2	55·9
November 1983	12·5	12·5	9·4	9·4

* The dates are dates of benefit upratings in the relevant years except for 1970 when no benefit uprating took place.
† Increase calculated to November 1985.
‡ The pensioners' price index is produced quarterly. The percentage increase is taken from the relevant quarter in the years listed to the fourth quarter of 1985.

Convalescent Facilities (Hampshire)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make additional funding available to the Southampton and South-West Hampshire health authority in order to retain adequate convalescent facilities such as those provided at Fred Woolley house.

Mr. Whitney: It is for the district health authority to plan and manage local services, within the resources made available to it by the regional health authority, in the light of local needs and priorities. We understand that the authority decided on 28 April to retain convalescent facilities at Fred Woolley home and the Netley Castle convalescent home.

Health Notice (86)11

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice he gives to health authorities, local authorities, community health councils and family practitioner committees on photocopying health notice HN(86)11; and if he will permit any form of reproduction other than photocopying.

Mr. Whitney: Most departmental circulars are directed at health authorities and therefore bear an inscription that they may be freely copied by those authorities. The same rule would, of course, apply to other circulars, for example, HN(86)11, but to make the point even clearer future circulars will spell this out in more detail. There are no restrictions on the type of reproduction methods that may be used.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement regarding the impact of the changes introduced by health notice HN(86)11 upon central Government support for local authorities, including an estimate of the expected change in cash support arising from the action expected to be taken by individual authorities.

Mr. Whitney: The main change announced in HN(86)11 was the decision to permit extended periods of joint financing for the expansion of services for drug misusers. This means that health authorities will be able to make payments to local authorities, and to voluntary organisations, for up to 10 years at 100 per cent. of the cost and for 13 years in all, for a social services input to the development of services for drug misusers. Extra allocations of funds to regional health authorities totalling £5 million a year for the expansion of these services were announced in circular HC(86)3. We expect most of the extra funds to be allocated under the joint finance arrangements with a reasonable proportion being applied to local authority and voluntary sector projects. It is not possible at present to say more precisely what the total effect will be of the decisions about joint finance taken by individual district health authorities.

It is not anticipated that the changes in HN(86)11 will otherwise have any bearing on central Government support for local authorities. They were relatively minor changes. First, the conditions for making capital grants were eased so that the full repayment of grant is no longer required in all circumstances where the property ceases to be used for the intended purpose. Second, the pattern of payments can now be revised in later years within the total maximum period and there is scope for the Secretary of State to approve extended periods of payments to meet the full revenue cost of a project. Third, the wording of the conditions is clarified regarding the duty of health authorities to satisfy themselves that voluntary organisations receiving joint finance grants will meet continuing financial responsibilities as joint finance tapers off.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many requests for further information have been received in response to his Department's public information campaign advertisements on acquired immune deficiency syndrome; how many such requests have not been answered; what is the average delay before a request is answered; and if he will estimate the maximum delay in future in answering requests.

Mr. Hayhoe: There have been approximately 3,000 requests for the Health Education Council leaflet on AIDS. The average length of time taken to deal with these requests is three to four days, and there are none outstanding. It is expected that future requests will be dealt with in a similar time scale. In addition, health education units and other organisations have ordered bulk supplies of the leaflet from the Council totalling 220,000. The time scale for dealing with these requests is normally three weeks, and it is expected that future bulk orders will be dealt with in a similar time scale.

NHS Disciplinary Inquiries

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he plans to review the procedure for National Health Service disciplinary inquiries.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am considering carefully expressions of concern about the disciplinary inquiry procedure for hospital doctors.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the number and estimated cost of National Health Service disciplinary inquiries for the 10 years to the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Health Authorities

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list payments by health authorities pursuant to section 28A of the National Health Service Act 1977 to local authorities other than those falling in part within the boundaries of the health district, broken down by health authority;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* all cases where a health authority is represented on a joint consultative committee for a geographical area which does not in part fall within the boundaries of that health district.

Mr. Whitney: The Department does not collect information about representation of joint consultative committees or about individual joint finance payments under section 28A.

Benefits (Coventry)

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons are in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit and *(b)* unemployment benefit in (i) the Coventry, North-East constituency and (ii) the city of Coventry; if he will list the categories under which benefit is claimed; and if he will give the equivalent figures for the past five years.

Mr. Major: Coventry is covered by two of the Department's local offices, Coventry (East) and Coventry (West), for supplementary benefit purposes and by five unemployment benefit offices in Coventry and one in Bedworth for unemployment benefit purposes. The boundaries of these offices are not conterminous with those of the Coventry North-East constituency or the city of Coventry.

Figures of people receiving supplementary benefit from both local offices at 11 February 1986, and at comparable dates for the last five years are as follows:—

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Persons under pension age excluding the unemployed	9,496	14,833	17,186	17,846	18,324	18,104
Unemployed persons*	5,424	6,296	7,860	9,537	10,675	11,214
Persons over pension age	11,056	11,093	11,302	11,198	11,235	11,008

* People in receipt of Unemployment Benefit and Supplementary Benefit are included in the total figure.
Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Figures of people receiving unemployment benefit from the unemployment benefit offices at November 1985—the latest available—and at comparable dates for the last five years are as follows:—

	*February 1982**	*November 1982*	*November 1983*	*November 1984**	*November 1985*
Persons in receipt of unemployment benefit only	8,164	7,253	5,794	n/a	4,750
Persons in receipt of unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit	2,550	2,250	2,016	n/a	1,471

* Figures for November 1981 and 1984 are not available because of a trade dispute.
Source: Quarterly analysis of unemployed claimants.

NHS (Residential Property)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many times in the past six years he has been the plaintiff in a court action for possession of National Health Service residential property.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many times in the past six years he has invoked Crown immunity; and what was the nature of each case.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Primary Health Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his Green Paper on primary health care, Cmnd. 9771, he will make a statement on the ways in which family doctors have a continuing responsibility for their patients.

Mr. Hayhoe: Under their terms of service, family doctors are responsible for providing their National Health Service patients with all necessary and appropriate personal medical services, and may do so either personally or by making other appropriate arrangements.

Iodate Tablets

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) who holds stocks of iodine tablets:

(2) how many iodine tablets are in stock per head of population and per head of population under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the average number of patients on a general practitioner's list in each year since 1974.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *88*]: The following is the information for unrestricted principal general medical practitioners in England:

Year	*Number of patients*
1974	2,384
1975	2,365
1976	2,351
1977	2,331
1978	2,312
1979	2,286
1980	2,247
1981	2,201
1982	2,155
1983	2,116
1984	2,089

ENVIRONMENT

Property Services Agency

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to change the way in which he receives private sector advice about the operation of the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Under present arrangements, I am advised by the chief executive of the PSA, who chairs the PSA board comprising his senior colleagues. In addition, the PSA advisory board comprising 11 persons from outside the Government has since 1980 reported direct to successive Secretaries of State on a wide range of key matters affecting the agency. I have concluded that it is now appropriate for private sector expertise to be more directly focused on the main issues which the agency faces. I have therefore decided to appoint three non-executive part-time members from outside the Government to the PSA board, and to discontinue the PSA advisory board. The chairman of the PSA advisory board, Mr. Nigel Mobbs (chairman and chief executive of Slough Estates plc) and his colleagues have welcomed my decision. I for my part have greatly valued, as have my three predecessors, the reports provided by the PSA advisory board. Their quality has been a material factor in persuading me to secure more immediate private sector involvement in the running of the PSA.

I am appointing to the PSA board for a period of one year Mr. B. J. Hill (chairman and chief executive of Higgs and Hill plc and a member of the PSA advisory board since 1980); for a period of two years Mr. H. L. Cousins (a partner in Price Waterhouse plc and a member of the PSA advisory board since 1985); and for a period of three years Mr. J. S. Brown, managing director of Peachey Property Corporation plc. These appointments commencing on 15 May 1986, will provide specialist outside advice in the fields of building, finance and estates respectively. Each non-executive member will be paid £4,000 per annum during the tenure of his appointment.

Radiation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many incidents involving the pollution of water supplies by nuclear waste radiation have been recorded since 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave: No incidents involving the pollution of public water supplies by radioactive discharges have been reported to my Department since 1979.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish the level of radioactive traces in rainwater for each area of the United Kingdom for each day from 2 April to 7 April.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ask the National Radiological Protection Board to publish all the detailed readings of radiation levels available to it over the past two weeks.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to monitor regularly radioactivity levels in the north of England and Scotland in the light of the Chernobyl incident; what steps he has taken to inform and protect the public in the present situation; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to make available for public scrutiny, a permanent register of radioactive disposals which includes the classification of radioactive waste in terms of the degree of risk involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have accepted the broad thrust of the report of the inter-departmental working party of officials on "Public Access to Environmental Information". (Pollution Paper No. 23 (1986)). One of the recommendations of that working party was that powers should be sought, by legislation, to require public registers to be kept setting out information relating to certificates issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 for disposal of radioactive waste. The Government intend to bring forward proposals on these lines after consultation with those most closely involved. The precise content of the register has yet to be determined.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the problems the United States of America nuclear dumping sites have faced, with special references to the detection of radionuclides beyond the site boundaries.

Mr. Waldegrave: The officers of my Department are kept informed about relevant developments in the United States of America and elsewhere through personal contacts, attending conferences, articles in the technical press and papers in learned scientific journals.

I shall be visiting the radioactive waste disposal site at Barnwell, South Carolina on a forthcoming visit to the USA and Canada.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the concept intermediate level waste was first used by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive and his Department; how is it defined; and if the definition of low level waste will now be expanded.

Mr. Waldegrave: The concept of intermediate-level waste has been well established for many years; but a precise agreed definition came with the adoption by the Government, the waste producers and NIREX of the definition recommended by the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee in its fifth annual report in June 1984. This is that intermediate-level waste is waste with radioactivity exceeding the boundaries for low-level waste (4 GBq/tonne alpha or 12 GBq/tonne beta/gamma), but which does not require heating to be taken into account in the design of storage for disposal facilities.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the maximum half-life of waste considered to be low level.

Mr. Waldegrave: Low level radioactive waste is defined as that with less than 4 GBq per tonne of alpha-emitting radioactivity and less than 12 GBq per tonne of beta-gamma radioactivity. It would not be sensible to specify a maximum half-life for radioactivity in low level waste; naturally occurring trace amounts of uranium have a half-life of over four billion years and stable elements have an infinitely long half-life.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much low level intermediate waste is produced each year by the nuclear industry.

Mr. Waldegrave: United Kingdom reactors were expected to produce about 640 cubic metres of intermediate level waste and 5,300 cubic metres of low level radioactive waste in 1985. Fuel reprocessing operations in the same year were expected to produce about 970 cubic metres of ILW and 2,900 cubic metres of LLW.

The volume anticipated in future years are given in the "Summary report on the 1985 United Kingdom Radioactive Waste Inventory" (Report No.: DOE/RW/85-196).

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive to be responsible for intermediate and high level nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: UK NIREX Ltd. is already responsible for the disposal of intermediate-level radioactive waste. The Environment Select Committee report recommended that it should have similar responsibility for heat generating waste also: this recommendation is being considered.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the same kind of soil and geological conditions are required for dumping of low level waste as for intermediate level waste.

Mrs. Rumbold: Trench disposal of low level waste would require geological conditions in which the water flow is low and the surrounding rocks provide a natural barrier to the migration of radionuclides. Trench disposal of short lived intermediate level waste would require the

same conditions. Longer lived intermediate waste, for which deep disposal is used, requires similar conditions, but in addition the ground should be suitable for mining operations.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether, in view of the changed plans for dumping of nuclear waste, he will defer the date of laying the special development order;

(2) whether, in view of the decision to dispose of only low level nuclear waste at one of the four sites, he now intends to publish new informations to local authorities about quantities, transportation, method of dumping, safety, risk, and other characteristics of nuclear waste dumps.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Houses (Multiple Occupancy)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 23 April, *Official Report*, column *166*, when in May he expects to publish a circular on houses in multiple occupancy.

Sir George Young: DOE circular 12/86 is due to be issued to local authorities on 22 May and published on 28 May.

Radioactive Isotopes

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all types of radioactive isotopes traced at monitoring points in the United Kingdom by the National Radiological Protection Board since 1 May.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following radioactive isotopes have been detected at monitoring stations in the United Kingdom since 1 May 1986.

Iodine-131, Iodine-132, Ruthenium-103, Caesium-134, Caesium-136, Caesium-137, Tellurium-132, Barium-140, Molybdenum-99, Niobium-95 and Zirconium-95.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ask the National Radiological Protection Board to make it its policy to publish the normal background radiation figures whenever publishing current readings.

Mr. Waldegrave: Relating levels of radiation and radioactivity to normal and natural background levels is not always practicable. When it is the National Radiological Protection Board does so.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any advice from the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee on the report of the Environment Committee on radioactive waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. I have received a letter from the chairman of RWMAC and have placed copies in the Library and the Vote Office.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Intervention Stores

1. **Miss Maynard** asked the Minister of Agricuture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest figures for the total value of agricultural produce in intervention stores in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: On 31 March the value of United Kingdom intervention stocks, calculated at March buying-in prices, was £1,368 million.

Badgers

8. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the future control of badgers.

Mrs. Fenner: My right hon. friend announced on 7 April that action on badgers would be confined to that part of the breakdown farm where it is believed that tuberculosis was transmitted to cattle, or to the whole farm if it is not possible to be more precise. A consequence of this change should be that fewer badgers will be killed.

Milk Quotas

9. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has now calculated the percentage of the value of the milk quota which will be received on average by an outgoing tenant.

Mr. Jopling: I do not believe it would be meaningful to do so.

24. **Mr. Cockeram** asked the Minster of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he had before reaching his decision on the allocation of milk quota allocation between the landlord and the tenant.

Mr. Jopling: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I had consultations with the National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association, the Tenant Farmers Association, the Farmers Union of Wales, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers, the Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers, the Agricultural law Association, the Milk Marketing Board, the Association of County Councils and the Association of Landowning Charities.

Fishing Industry

16. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he has had with representatives of the fishing industry about Her Majesty's Government's plans to tax the supplies used by east European factory ships.

Mr. Gummer: The Government are well aware of the concern of the pelagic sector of the fishing industry at the proposal by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to apply import duty to the supplies used by east European factory ships and this matter is currently under consideration.

Fish Quotas

18. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent United Kingdom fish quotas remain unused.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom's quotas under the common fisheries policy for the Community's autonomous and joint stocks amounted to a total of 837,660 tonnes last year, of which 680,621 tonnes were taken. The United Kingdom's distant water quotas in the waters of certain third countries were for the most part substantially underused last year.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which European Economic Community countries have been allocated fishing quotas, and for what species, in Russian waters.

Mr. Gummer: None.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which European Economic Community countries have been allocated fishing quotas, and for what species, in Swedish waters.

Mr. Gummer: The information is set out in the annex to Council regulation (EEC) No. 3725/85 of 20 December 1985 which was published in the Official Journal of the European Communities No. L361 of 31 December 1985 and copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which European Economic Community countries have been allocated fishing quotas, and for what species, in Norwegian waters.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested on Norwegian exclusive stocks and certain joint stocks in the North sea is set out in the annexes to Council regulation (EEC) No. 3730/85 of 20 December 1985. For the remaining joint stocks in the North sea, there are limits on the quantity which may be fished in Norwegian waters: these limitations, however, are not separately allocated between member states. Information concerning these major North sea joint stocks is contained in Council regulation (EEC) No. 3721/85 of 20 December 1985. The above regulations were published in the Official Journal of the European Communities No. L361 of 31 December 1985, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which European Economic Community countries have been allocated fishing quotas, and for what species, in Faroes waters.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is set out in the annex to Council regulation (EEC) No. 3732/85 of 20 December 1985 which was published in the Official Journal of the European Communities No. L361 of 31 December 1985 and copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which European Economic Community vessels have been allocated fishing quotas, and for what species, in Greenland waters.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is set out in the annex to Council regulation (EEC) No. 3783/85 of 31 December 1985 which was published in the Official Journal of the European Communities No. 363 of 31 December 1985 and copies of which are available in the Library.

Beef

19. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the likely effect on the retail price of beef of an end to the beef variable premium scheme.

Mr. Gummer: During the recent CAP price-fixing negotiations, we were able to secure the continuation of the beef variable premium scheme when the maximum rate will, following the devaluation of the green pound, be 16·69 p/kg on eligible carcases at the deadweight stage. This is equivalent to rather over 10·5 p/lb at the retail level on beef from carcases which have benefited from the premium. The actual effect on retail prices does, however, depend upon butchers' pricing policies for the various types and cuts of meat.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

20. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he plans any further cuts in the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service after April 1987.

Mr. Jopling: I have no present plans for reductions in the size of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) beyond those announced in the written answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 27 February.

Rural Economy

22. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the contribution that agriculture is currently making to the rural economy.

Mrs. Fenner: Agriculture makes a substantial contribution to the economy amounting to £5,265 million as its share of gross domestic product in 1985.

The agreement on agricultural prices and related measures reached last month will enable the industry to sustain its major role in the rural economy while taking account of the need to adjust to the changing demands it has to meet.

EC Farm Budget

23. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate how much the European Economic Community will overspend in the current year on the farm budget.

Mr. Jopling: The Commission has indicated that a supplementary budget will be needed in 1986. This is in part because of additional expenditure on agriculture arisng from the decline in value of the dollar against the ecu and the realignment of European currencies. The Commission has said that it will propose an additional provision of 915 mecu to allow for these factors.

Horticultural Development Council

25. **Sir John Wells** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action the Government will be taking following the vote in favour of a horticultural development council in the recent poll of growers.

Mrs. Fenner: Following the poll of growers, the results of which were announced on 4 April, my right hon. Friend and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales have decided to proceed with arrangements for setting up a Horticultural Development Council for Great Britain. The council will have powers to raise a levy on sales of horticultural produce excluding apples, pears, hops and mushrooms, and to use the resultant funds to commission research and development. A draft order

under the Industrial Organisation and Development Act 1947 will be laid before Parliament shortly with a view to the council coming into being in June or July this year.

My right hon. Friend is encouraged that the horticultural industry has responded in this positive way to the Government's policy that industry should contribute to R and D from which it benefits and very much hopes that other sectors of the agriculture industry will follow this lead.

Sugar Beet

26. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the prospects for suger beet growers in the west midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Yes. I see no reason at present to be dissatisfied.

Lamb Prices

27. **Mr. Charles Morrison** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the spring 1986 lamb prices.

Mr. Gummer: Average market prices for lamb in March and April this year have been higher than in the corresponding weeks of previous years, partly reflecting lower supplies due to the poor weather which has delayed the growth of lambs.

Environmental Protection

28. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there have been any recent developments in the area of environmental protection for which he is responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Environmental objectives are now fully integrated into the policy areas for which I am responsible. To underline my commitment, the Agriculture Bill currently before Parliament contains a clause which will place upon me and my successors a statutory duty to endeavour to achieve a reasonable balance between the inter-related needs of the countryside; agriculture, conservation, socio-economic interests and recreation.

EC (Structure Proposals)

29. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are his initial reactions to the Community's 1986 structures proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I support the principle of encouraging alternative land use and diversification into alternative agricultural products in which the Community is not in surplus.

We shall, of course, wish to consider carefully the Commission's detailed proposals in this light, taking full account of their effectiveness and the likely costs and benefits.

New Zealand Butter

30. **Sir Peter Mills** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether New Zealand butter quota is included in the EEC calculation of the United Kingdom's milk quota; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom milk quota, like those of other member states, is based on past national production levels with no account being taken of imports from New Zealand or any other source.

Dry Sow Stalls

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations have been received during the past two years by his Department on the subject of dry sow stalls.

Mrs. Fenner: Many of the letters my Department receives deal with several animal welfare issues at once. During the past two years about 400 of them have focused specifically on dry sow stalls.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Maclennan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the trend in farmers' real incomes over the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The index of farming income in real terms rose from 113 to 146 in 1984. It fell sharply to 78 in 1985 particularly because of the bad weather. The constructive changes which were agreed in the price fixing are intended to protect farming incomes overall while at the same time tackling some of the problems of surpluses.

Pigs

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the present state of the pig industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: After the reasonable years of 1984 and 1985 the profitability of pig production has declined this year as pig prices have fallen and feed costs have increased. However, pig prices have stabilised since the introduction of a private storage aid scheme on 1 April. The reduction in cereal prices which will flow from the recent price fixing decisions will benefit the pig industry as will the reduction in negative MCAs in the pig sector. Long term prospects will depend on the continuing balance between supply and demand for pigs and on the industry's own efforts to expand its share of the United Kingdom market for bacon and other pigmeat products and develop pigmeat exports. This is one area in which we still do not meet the United Kingdom demand.

Spanish Corn and Sorghum

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current percentage level of variable levy which is applicable to imports of corn and sorghum to Spain in consequence of the accession of Spain to the European Economic Community; and what was the level of levy applied before the treaty of Accession was signed.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Privatisation

Mr. Thurnham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest estimates for savings by his Department during 1986-87 as a result of contracting out services to private contractors.

Mr. Jopling: We estimate that contracting out foreign travel arrangements will save about £74,000 in 1986-87. Also my Department will be testing the market for a number of new activities in 1986-87. The possible savings will depend upon the results of those tenders.

Food From Britain

Mr. Pike asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about the future financing of Food From Britain.

Mr. Gummer: We have received a large number of representations, almost all emphasising the importance of Food From Britain. I very much hope that the industry will respond to this feeling and play its part by providing FFB with the funds necessary to secure its future.

Imports (Radiation)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied that EEC nations are able to identify which agricultural products imported from the East German state bodies were actually grown or processed in other East European states; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: Discussions are in progress in Brussels on these issues.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any information about the extent to which agricultural produce in East Germany has been affected by radiation from the Soviet nuclear power station at Chernobyl; and if there is any evidence that it has been affected less than produce grown in Romania and Hungary.

Mrs. Fenner: Information on the extent of radioactivity in agricultural produce is being collected and will be studied by the appropriate authorities in Brussels.

Mr. Robert Maclennan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, whether the royalty income and receipts from sales from the National Seed Development Organisation is available directly to finance further breeding work.

Mrs. Fenner: Fifty per cent. of the royalty income from the NSDO, together with all dividend payments, accrues to the Consolidated Fund for extra receipts. The remainder of the royalty and sales income is used to finance NSDO's business of the production and marketing of state-bred varieties. NSDO income is therefore not available directly to finance breeding work.

EEC Stocks

Mr. Leadbitter asked the Mnister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the European Economic Community stocks held in dairy products and beef; what steps he has taken to include the United Kingdom in the marketing of those stocks; and what representations he has made to curtail the supply of stocks to Russia and Libya.

Mr. Gummer: The Community continues to have excessive stocks of milk products and of beef. In the short term we are seeking to reduce the stocks, including the use of schemes to benefit consumers in the Community. Exports on to the world market are often a more cost-effective outlet but we are opposed to arrangements which pick out particular countries for special treatment.

Herd Buy-out Schemes

Mr. Speller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek powers to implement a whole herd buy-out scheme to purchase and slaughter cows, similar to that now in operation in the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The American scheme is similar to the EC non-marketing of milk premium scheme which operated between 1977 and 1980 but which did not prove to be a great success. The Commission has preferred to tackle the problem through an EC outgoers scheme linked to milk quotas and which aims to reduce quota levels by 3 per cent. over the next three years.

Agricultural Advice

Dr. Marek asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to be in a position to announce details of the new charges for agricultural advice.

Mrs. Fenner: We intend to give the industry an indication of the types of advice and services ADAS will market at the 1986 Royal Show. The prices to be charged for the different types of advisory products and services and the condition of business will be announced during the second half of 1986 and early in 1987.

EEC Price Review

Mr. Latham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the latest state of negotiations on the European Economic Community price review.

Mr. Jopling: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement my right hon. Friend made to the House on 28 April.

Advisory Committee on Pesticides

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his practice as to establishing, before appointing a candidate to the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, whether he or she is or has been employed as a consultant to a company manufacturing pesticides or engaged by such a company to undertake research.

Mrs. Fenner: Our first concern when considering candidates for appointment to the Advisory Committee on Pesticides is to establish whether, with their particular expertise and experience, they would be able to make a worthwhile contribution to the committee's work.

Although past commercial connections of prospective candidates are taken into account, the existence of such connections would not necessarily prevent us from appointing an individual. It is of course a condition of appointment to the committee that prospective members sign a declaration of their present independence from all commercial interests.

Veal Calves

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any grant of public money has been authorised by his Department for the construction of a veal calf rearing unit fitted with crates or pens less than 2 ft wide since the issue of the welfare code on the keeping of veal calves.

Mrs. Fenner: The present welfare code for cattle recommends that the width of a pen for a singly-penned animal should be not less than the height of the animal at the withers. Units that do not comply with this or other recommendations of the code would not be eligible for grant. I am aware of one unit with pens less than 2 ft wide that was grant-aided in 1979 when the previous cattle code recommended a smaller space allowance.

Surpluses (Price Fixing)

Mr. Marlow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, assuming similar weather patterns in 1986 to 1985, what estimate he has made of the effect, in volume and value terms, by commodity, of the latest common agricultural policy price fixing on surpluses.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 May 1986, c. *492*]: The common agricultural policy price fixing includes adjustments to the cereals regime which by changing the intervention arrangements and quality standards will, together with the 3 per cent. co-responsibility levy, substantially reduce the effective level of support. For the milk sector a cut of 3 per cent. in quotas in all member states has been agreed. It is not possible to estimate the effect of these and the other changes on production in 1986 given the many uncertainties, including how producers will respond to the pressure on support prices.

Agricultural Holdings

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will bring up to date the information on the size and ownership of agricultural holdings given in his answer of 22 July 1982, *Official Report*, column *251-54*.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *94*]: The requested information is as follows, together with revised data for 1980.

Total area of holding

	Holdings owned or mainly owned (number '000)	*Holdings rented or mainly rented (number '000)*	*Area owner occupied (hectares '000)*	*Area rented (hectares '000)*
	1985 Data			
England				
Under 2	9·6	1·4	10·1	1·6
2 to 19·9	42·2	10·5	367·6	110·0
20 to 199·9	52·1	28·6	3,398·4	2,076·3
200 and over	5·1	4·2	1,826·8	1,627·8
Total	109·0	44·8	5,602·8	3,815·7
Wales				
Under 2	0·7	0·1	0·9	0·1
2 to 19·9	8·6	1·9	83·1	21·4
20 to 199·9	13·2	4·4	786·9	272·6
200 and over	0·7	0·3	227·1	103·3
Total	23·2	6·6	1,097·9	397·3
Scotland				
Under 2	0·9	0·7	1·0	0·8
2 to 19·9	4·6	3·8	38·9	32·0
20 to 199·9	11·0	6·0	827·2	485·2
200 and over	2·3	2·1	2,388·4	1,622·8
Total	18·8	12·6	3,255·5	2,140·8
	1980 (Revised Data)			
England				
Under 2	8·7	1·9	8·8	2·0
2 to 19·9	39·0	13·2	349·1	137·6
20 to 199·9	50·9	33·0	3,266·9	2,323·2
200 and over	4·7	4·3	1,696·9	1,657·6
Total	103·3	52·4	5,321·7	4,120·3
Wales				
Under 2	0·4	0·1	0·5	0·1
2 to 19·9	7·7	2·4	78·1	27·3
20 to 199·9	13·0	5·1	751·2	309·5
200 and over	0·6	0·3	215·2	108·8
Total	21·6	7·9	1,045·0	445·7

Scotland				
Under 2	0·8	0·7	0·9	0·8
2 to 19·9	3·5	4·4	31·9	37·0
20 to 199·9	10·4	7·2	795·2	543·5
200 and over	2·4	2·0	2,414·7	1,755·6
Total	17·1	14·3	3,242·6	2,336·8

Notes:
(1) Excludes data on minor holdings.
(2) Practically all land in Northern Ireland is owner occupied.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 9 May 1986

NORTHERN IRELAND

Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total value of scientific and medical equipment which disappeared from the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast, in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The total value of losses of clinical equipment is as follows:

	£
1980-81	120
1981-82	363
1982-83	2,010
1983-84	1,301
1984-85	79

The safeguarding of equipment is a matter for local management.

Armagh Prison

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why workmen are working overtime during weekends at the former Armagh prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the right hon. Gentleman as soon as possibe.

Soviet Union (Nuclear Accident)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to make a statement about *(a)* the implications of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster for the people of Northern Ireland, *(b)* precautions to be taken and *(c)* the existing monitoring systems in Ulster.

Mr. Tom King: Radiation levels, well below those which might give cause for concern, were detected in the eastern part of the Province on Saturday evening 3 May. The levels were only slightly above those found naturally in Northern Ireland as normal background radiation. The levels have been decreasing since that date and are well below recommended levels for precautionary action.

Press statements were issued by the Northern Ireland Office on Tuesday 6 May and Thursday 8 May giving details of radiation levels and telephone numbers for further public inquiries.

Monitoring of radiation levels in Northern Ireland is carried out regularly by a number of Government Departments. Milk and water supplies in the Province are being monitored and radiation measurements are being taken in the atmosphere. In addition, ships from the Baltic arriving in Northern Ireland are being checked for signs of radioactivity.

Maze Prison

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why there has been a recent change in policy to combine the compound and cellular sections of Her Majesty's prison, the Maze; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the right hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Leavers (Qualifications)

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will set out in tabular form the number of graduates or qualified leavers from other institutions of higher education in Great Britain for every year from 1970 to the latest available date, together with such information as he has as to the comparable figures for France, West Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States of America;

(2) if he will set out in tabular form the number of qualified leavers, the age participation index and the qualified participation index for higher education in Great Britain for every year from 1970 to the latest available date, together with such information, as he has as to the comparable figures for France, West Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Walden: Data in the form requested are not available for all years. The table shows such data as are readily available and can be provided without disproportionate cost.

	New entrants to higher education per relevant poopulation[1]			*Numbers qualifying for higher education per relevant population*[1]		*Higher education output*[9]					
	1970 per cent.	*1975 per cent.*	*1982 per cent.*	*1970 per cent.*	*1982 per cent.*	*Number 1970 000s*	*Rate*[10] *1970 per cent.*	*Number 1978 000s*	*Rate*[10] *1978 per cent.*	*Number 1982 000s*	*Rate*[10] *1982 per cent.*
France	n.a.	27·5	34·1	20	[6] 25					[11] 213	[11] 25
Germany	15·3	19·5	27·8	11	26		not available on a consistent basis			[11] 191	[11] 21
Italy	[2] 25·6	[2] 31·1	[2] [3] 27·6	34	[7] 39	61	9	78	10	75	9
Japan	[4] 24·3	[4] 39·0	[4] 34·2	74	86	366	17	[12] 558	[12] 35	[12] 551	[12] 34
USA	[4] 55·1	[4] 60·0	[4] 61·2	76	[7] 72	1,066	32	[13] [14] 1,488	[13] [14] 37	[13] [14] 1,388	[13] [14] 32
UK	[5] 28·2	[5] 30·0	[3] [5] 30·1	[8] 20	[8] 22	[15] 182	[15] 20	[15] 235	[15] 30	[3] [15] 227	[3] [15] 25

n.a. Not available.

[1] As a percentage of the average population in the most relevant age group.

[2] First year students.

[3] 1983.

[4] Includes private sector and possibly some re-entrants.

[5] Overseas students and those already with a higher education qualification excluded. Excludes students studying for higher education qualifications outside public education other than nursing and paramedical at DHSS establishments. If all correspondence courses and private sector higher education were included then UK figure would be around 40 per cent. in 1982.

[6] 1979.

[7] 1980.

[8] Percentage gaining 1 or more A-levels or Scottish equivalent. Rates for 2 or more A-levels are 14 per cent. and 16 per cent. respectively. Other non-advanced qualifications are accepted for entry to higher education.

[9] Excluding postgraduates.

[10] Related to single young age group relating to the likely qualification ages.

[11] 1981.

[12] Includes private sector and correspondence courses.

[13] 1976.

[14] Includes private sector.

[15] Includes estimates for professional qualifications, and nursing and paramedical courses under the auspices of the DHSS. Excludes private sector.

School and College Sports Facilities

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance is currently given to local education authorities on policies towards making school and college sports facilities more widely available for community use, and on seeking dual-use of existing non-educational sports facilities for the schools and colleges under their control.

Mr. Dunn: Extensive guidance has been given by the Department both on the "dual use" of educational premises and facilities, and on the joint provision of facilities designed from the outset to serve educational as well as non-educational users. Policy guidance is set out in circular 11/64 "Provision of Facilities for Sport" and circular 2/70 "The Chance to Share". Design guidance is available in a number of publications, copies of which are available in the Library, and which include building bulletins 49 "Abraham Moss Centre, Manchester" (1973), 59 "The Victoria Centre, Crewe" (1981), 28 "Playing fields and hard surface areas" (1982), and design notes 14 "School and Community" (1976), 36 "Secondary school playing fields" (1983) and 42 "The Dukeries Complex —a place for the family" (1985).

Southern Examining Group (Syllabuses)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he remains satisfied that all syllabuses issued by the Southern Examining Group will be available in schools for the heads of department by the end of May.

Mr. Dunn: I understand that the Southern Examining Group expects to have distributed 47 syllabuses to schools by the end of the month. A further 29 syllabuses will be distributed shortly afterwards.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. John Morris asked the Attorney-General how many vacancies in the Crown Prosecutors Department have now been filled in London and in the areas in which there was hitherto no prosecuting solicitor's department.

The Attorney-General: The total authorised establishment (legal and non-legal grades) for each of the Crown prosecution service areas to which the right hon. and learned Member's question refers is shown in the table, together with the number of staff currently employed by the Director and assigned to that area.

Area	*Authorised establishment*	*Staff in post in service of Director*
Inner London	369	71
Outer London North	223	35
Outer London South (including Surrey)	181	32
Bedfordshire/Hertfordshire	89	18
Leicesterhire/Northamptonshire	78	14
Staffordshire/Warwickshire	79	14
Cleveland/North Yorkshire	82	17

The numbers of staff in post do not include the staff currently employed by the prosecuting solicitors' departments in Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and Cleveland who will transfer to the Crown prosecution service on 1 October 1986, nor do they include any staff who have been appointed but not yet taken up their posts.

Mr. Derry Mainwaring Knight

Mr. Greenway asked the Attorney-General if he will provide a breakdown of the costs of the recent trial of Mr. Derry Mainwaring Knight; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The total cost to public funds of an individual trial comprises numerous elements, some of which may be part of the general running costs of the several Government Departments concerned and therefore cannot be ascertained as separate component except as a somewhat arbitrary estimate. So far as regards fees to the legal profession (prosecuting or defending), it is not the practice to publish individual fees, and in any event these cannot be ascertained until after taxation of bills of costs, which has not yet taken place.

WALES

Cancer

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many women in Wales died of *(a)* breast cancer and *(b)* cervical cancer in each of the years 1980 to 1985, inclusive.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is given in the following table:

ICD Numbers	*Cause of death*	*Number of deaths*					
		1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
	Malignant neoplasm of:						
174	Female breast	713	745	740	748	806	768
180	Cervix uteri	125	133	118	136	114	139

Radiation

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what measures he has taken to inform and provide about a contaminated atmosphere and rainfall consequential upon the nuclear power station disaster in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics;

(2) if he will set up a telephone information office in Cardiff to handle requests for information and to provide advice to inquirers about the consequences of the Chernobyl reactor disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information and advice was provided on 5 May by the National Radiological Protection Board, in conjunction with the Welsh Office and other Government Departments. A statement was made to the House on 6 May by my right hon. Friend the

Secretary of State for the Environment about the arrangements for monitoring the effects in the United Kingdom of the accident at Chernobyl and a special telephone inquiry point was established that day within the Welsh Office. On 7 May, the Welsh Office issued a press notice updating advice given previously, and further advice will be issued as necessary.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing the most recent rates of unemployment in *(a)* all travel-to-work areas receiving regional development grants, *(b)* all travel-to-work areas receiving only regional selective assistance, *(c)* travel-to-work areas which receive no assistance but have rates higher than any in *(a)* and *(b)* and *(d)* travel-to-work areas which receive no assistance but have rates within 2 per cent. of any in *(a)* and *(b)*.

Mr. Lang: Following are tables giving the requested information for travel-to-work areas as at 6 March 1986. Table A shows the 42 travel-to-work areas that receive regional development grants; table B the 57 travel-to-work areas that receive only regional selective assistance; table C the 68 travel-to-work areas that receive no assistance but have rates higher than any in tables A or B; and table D shows the 118 travel-to-work areas that receive no assistance but have rates within 2 per cent. of any in tables A and B.

Table A
Unemployed claimants
Rate calculation year=1984 (defaulted)
Discontinuity—Change in the compilation of the unemployment statistics (March 1986). See Employment Gazette, March/April 1986, pages 107-108, or, Appendix G (April 1986 edition of the manual).

	1984 TTWA Name	All	Rate
1	Newquay	2,779	28·4
2	Cardigan	1,707	27·2
3	Cumnock and Sanquhar	4,553	26·8
4	South Tyneside	15,732	25·9
5	Irvine	11,906	25·7
6	Lampeter and Aberaeron	1,150	25·1
7	Helston	1,563	24·9
8	South Pembrokeshire	3,344	24·9
9	Holyhead	4,192	24·7
10	Hartlepool	10,111	23·7
11	Penzance and St. Ives	3,881	23·1
12	Middlesbrough	30,188	23·0
13	Redruth and Camborne	4,728	23·0
14	Rotherham and Mexborough	23,857	22·8
15	Bishop Auckland	9,480	22·6
16	Falmouth	2,237	22·2
17	Corby	5,118	22·0
18	Sunderland	38,004	22·0
19	Whitby	1,376	21·6
20	Aberdare	4,010	21·6
21	Greenock	10,245	21·6
22	Bathgate	10,082	21·5
23	Lanarkshire	33,035	21·1
24	Blaenau Gwent and Abergavenny	7,413	20·9
25	Merthyr and Rhymney	11,011	20·9
26	Liverpool	105,578	20·9
27	Dumbarton	5,999	20·5
28	Stockton-on-Tees	15,527	20·1
29	Shotton, Flint and Rhyl	13,513	19·9
30	Wigan and St. Helens	35,097	19·2
31	Widnes and Runcorn	11,482	19·2
32	Arbroath	1,751	19·0
33	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	67,301	18·8
34	Workington	4,717	18·7
35	Scunthorpe	9,530	18·5
36	Kilmarnock	5,682	18·4
37	Wirral and Chester	39,044	18·3
38	Pontypridd and Rhondda	11,342	17·6
39	Glasgow	113,565	17·7
40	Wrexham	7,958	17·5
41	Dundee	16,236	16·7
42	Neath and Port Talbot	8,114	16·1
	Totals	724,138	20·0

Table B
Unemployed claimants
Rate calculation year=1984 (defaulted)
Discontinuity—Change in the compilation of the unemployment statistics (March 1986). See Employment Gazette, March/April 1986, pages 107-108, or, Appendix G (April 1986 edition of the manual).

	1984 TTWA Name	All	Rate
1	Forres	800	27·9
2	Skye and Wester Ross	1,138	24·1
3	Fishguard	743	23·7
4	Newton Stewart	767	23·3
5	Sutherland	895	22·9
6	Lochaber	1,803	22·7
7	Girvan	822	22·2
8	Telford and Bridgnorth	12,976	21·6
9	Invergordon and Dingwall	3,091	21·6
10	Pwllheli	1,143	21·4
11	Doncaster	21,446	20·6
12	Barnsley	16,163	20·4
13	Alloa	3,527	20·1
14	Haverfordwest	4,019	19·3
15	Western Isles	1,881	19·3
16	Bangor and Caernarfon	5,167	19·2
17	Bodmin and Liskeard	3,655	19·0
18	Dunoon and Bute	1,474	19·0
19	Bude	1,043	19·0
20	Campbeltown	805	18·7
21	Llanelli	6,071	18·6
22	Wolverhampton	25,410	18·5
23	Badenoch	673	18·4
24	Falkirk	11,259	18·4
25	Kirkcaldy	11,933	18·3
26	Porthmadoc and Ffestiniog	1,092	18·0
27	Wick	835	17·9
28	Morpeth and Ashington	8,596	17·8
29	Bridgend	9,571	17·8
30	Rochdale	10,827	17·7
31	Walsall	26,406	17·7
32	Gainsborough	2,150	17·6
33	Hull	30,948	17·4
34	Cinderford and Ross-on-Wye	4,471	17·4
35	Pontypool and Cwmbran	6,531	17·3
36	Dudley and Sandwell	45,966	17·0
37	Stranraer	1,383	16·7
38	Bolton and Bury	28,541	16·5
39	Birmingham	122,386	16·4
40	Dunfermline	8,197	16·3
41	Newport	13,033	16·2
42	Swansea	18,027	16·1
43	Kidderminster	5,826	16·1
44	Sheffield	45,758	16·0
45	Grimsby	12,238	15·8
46	Bradford	31,142	15·4
47	Darlington	7,371	15·3
48	Coventry and Hinckley	36,696	15·3
49	Plymouth	18,295	15·1
50	Blackburn	9,659	15·1
51	Cardiff	29,362	14·8
52	Ayr	7,055	14·5
53	Accrington and Rossendale	6,529	14·5
54	Durham	9,325	14·5
55	Stewartry	1,089	14·5

	1984 TTWA Name	All	Rate
56	Manchester	109,844	14·4
57	Oldham	11,755	14·2
	Totals	819,554	16·4

	1984 TTWA Name	All	Rate
65	Welshpool	935	14·2
66	Retford	2,818	14·2
	Totals	341,431	16·1

Table C

Rate calculation year=1984 (defaulted)

Discontuity—Change in the compilation of the unemployment statistics (March 1986). See Employment Gazette, March-April 1986, pages 107-108, or, Appendix G (April 1986 edition of the manual).

	1984 TTWA Name	All	Rate
1	Skegness	2,805	25·6
2	Thanet	8,492	21·5
3	Machynlleth	623	20·9
4	Torbay	8,813	20·3
5	Bideford	1,815	20·2
6	Clacton	3 ,878	20·0
7	Louth and Mablethorpe	2,230	18·5
8	Wisbech	3,037	18·3
9	Alnwick and Amble	1,916	18·2
10	Oban	1,296	18·2
11	Bridlington and Driffield	3,224	18·0
12	Torrington	644	17·6
13	Great Yarmouth	7,236	17·6
14	Buckie	687	17·5
15	Worksop	4,159	17·4
16	Pontypool and Cwnbran	6,531	17·3
17	Dolgellau and Barmouth	751	17·2
18	Dartmouth and Kingsbridge	1,195	17·2
19	Dudley and Sandwell	45,966	17·0
20	Lockerbie	671	16·9
21	Isle of Wight	7,372	16·9
22	Blairgowrie and Pitlochry	1,646	16·7
23	Cromer and North Walsham	2,803	16·6
24	Annan	1,353	16·6
25	Blackpool	19,078	16·5
26	Goole and Selby	4,415	16·4
27	Scarborough and Filey	4,892	16·3
28	Conwy and Colwyn	4,987	16·3
29	Berwickshire	782	16·3
30	Folkestone	4,866	16·2
31	Neath and Port Talbot	8,114	16·1
32	Horncastle and Market Rasen	1,701	15·7
33	Barnstaple and Ilfracombe	3,716	15·7
34	Minehead	1,403	15·7
35	Lowestoft	4,840	15·6
36	Hastings	7,227	15·6
37	Wakefield and Dewsbury	17,670	15·5
38	Pendle	4,735	15·4
39	Lancaster and Morecambe	7,324	15·4
40	Castleford and Pontefract	8,875	15·3
41	Llandeilo	498	15·3
42	Boston	3,596	15·2
43	Weston-super-Mare	5,473	15·2
44	Islay-Mid Argyll	693	15·2
45	Ludlow	1,661	15·2
46	Llandrindod Wells	1,110	15·1
47	Mansfield	9,078	15·0
48	Sittingbourne and Sheerness	5,729	15·0
49	Fakenham	1,598	14·9
50	Totnes	912	14·9
51	Chesterfield	10,856	14·8
52	Newton Abbot	3,365	14·7
53	Oswestry	1,823	14·7
54	Bridgwater	4,211	14·7
55	St. Austell	3,207	14·6
56	Newark	3,314	14·5
57	Thirsk	633	14·5
58	Keswick	459	14·5
59	King's Lynn and Hunstanton	5,857	14·4
60	Southend	34,424	14·4
61	Lincoln	8,689	14·4
62	Whitchurch and Market Drayton	1,901	14·3
63	Denbigh	1,231	14·2
64	Launceston	894	14·2

Table D

Rate calculation year=1984 (Defaulted)

Discontinuity—Change in the compilation of the unemployment statistics (March 1986).

See Employment Gazette, March/April 1986, pages 107-108, or, Appendix G (April 1986 edition of the manual).

	1984 TTWA Name	All	Rate
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6	Torbay	8,813	20·3
7	Bideford	1,815	20·2
8	Clacton	3,878	20·0
9	Louth and Mablethorpe	2,230	18·5
10	Wisbech	3,037	18·3
11	Alnwick and Amble	1,916	18·2
12	Oban	1,296	18·2
13	Bridlington and Driffield	3,224	18·0
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16	Buckie	687	17·5
17	Worksop	4,159	17·4
18	Pontypool and Cwmbran	6,531	17·3
19	Dolgellau and Barmouth	751	17·2
20	Dartmouth and Kingsbridge	1,195	17·2
21	Dudley and Sandwell	45,966	17·0
22	Lockerbie	671	16·9
23	Isle of Wight	7,372	16·9
24	Blairgowrie and Pitlochry	1,646	16·7
25	Cromer and North Walsham	2,803	16·6
26	Annan	1,353	16·6
27	Blackpool	19,078	16·5
28	Goole and Selby	4,415	16·4
29	Scarborough and Filey	4,892	16·3
30	Conwy and Colwyn	4,987	16·3
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36	Minehead	1,403	15·7
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38	Hastings	7,227	15·6
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44	Boston	3,596	15·2
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55	Oswestry	1,823	14·7
56	Bridgwater	4,211	14·7
57	St. Austell	3,207	14·6
58	Newark	3,314	14·5
59	Thirsk	633	14·5
60	Keswick	459	14·5
61	King's Lynn and Hunstanton	5,857	14·4
62	Southend	34,424	14·4
63	Lincoln	8,689	14·4

	1984 TTWA Name	All	Rate
64	Whitchurch and Market Drayton	1,901	14·3
65	Denbigh	1,231	14·2
66	Launceston	894	14·2
67	Welshpool	935	14·2
68	Retford	2,818	14·2
69	Crieff	486	14·1
70	Peterborough	12,313	14·0
71	Richmondshire	1,672	14·0
72	Thetford	2,741	13·9
73	Sleaford	1,462	13·9
74	Harwich	1,136	13·8
75	Nottingham	44,756	13·7
76	Northwich	6,257	13·7
77	Huddersfield	11,337	13·7
78	Burnley	5,979	13·7
79	Monmouth	663	13·7
80	Dover and Deal	5,158	13·6
81	Inverness	5,009	13·6
82	Milton Keynes	9,526	13·6
83	Canterbury	5,815	13·5
84	Okehampton	589	13·5
85	Bournemouth	12,790	13·5
86	Fraserburg	813	13·4
87	Whitehaven	4,000	13·3
88	Warrington	10,116	13·2
89	Keighley	3,974	13·2
90	Berwick-upon-Tweed	1,219	13·2
91	Hereford and Leominster	5,684	13·2
92	Malvern and Ledbury	2,482	13·1
93	Newtown	1,084	13·1
94	Gosport and Fareham	6,562	13·0
95	Alfreton and Ashfield	7,286	12·9
96	Calderdale	10,119	12·9
97	Keith	673	12·9
98	Grantham	2,760	12·9
99	Brechin and Montrose	1,639	12·8
100	Leeds	41,904	12·8
101	Medway and Maidstone	27,186	12·8
102	Portsmouth	20,081	12·8
103	Orkney Islands	845	12·7
104	Elgin	1,916	12·7
105	Beccles and Halesworth	1,684	12·6
106	Stoke	24,000	12·6
107	Bridport	892	12·4
108	Truro	2,612	12·4
109	Burton-on-Trent	7,362	12·4
110	Ashford	3,811	12·4
111	Derby	17,889	12·3
112	Stamford	2,014	12·3
113	Aberystwyth	1,408	12·3
114	South Molton	495	12·2
115	Thurso	749	12·2
116	Peebles	574	12·2
117	Brighton	19,337	12·2
118	Carlisle	6,133	12·2

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table of employees in employment at June 1979, June 1983 and December 1985 which shows *(a)* all employees, *(b)* part-time employees and *(c)* employees who are engaged in Government special employment schemes.

Mr. Lang: The available estimates are:

Employees in Employment in Great Britain
Seasonally adjusted: thousands

	All industries	of which: Part-time females	of which: Engaged on* employment measures
June 1979	22,619	3,842	159
June 1983	20,514	3,939	277
December 1985	21,079	4,413	288

* Not including training schemes, not seasonally adjusted.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Investment Companies

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to what extent his Department is able to exercise its regulatory role in respect of the activities in the United Kingdom of companies based in foreign countries which offer investments to citizens in the United Kingdom but which transact their business entirely by post and which do not have any establishment or outlet in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My Department can exercise its regulatory powers only upon persons within United Kingdom jurisdiction. However, I presume that my hon. Friend's concern was prompted mainly by the activities of certain firms in Amsterdam; and i am glad to be able to tell him that the Netherlands authorities — who have been well aware of our concern about these activities— have now taken appropriate measures. The relevant legislation came into effect on 1 May.

Since a number of hon. Members have written to me on this subject, I am having a copy of the English language briefing, prepared by the Netherlands Ministry of Finance, placed in the Library.

Gas Consumer Council

Mr. Orme asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what salary he expects to pay to regional representatives on the Gas Consumer Council if the Gas Bill is enacted;

(2) what salary is currently paid to chairmen of regional gas consumer councils.

Mr. Howard: The chairmen of regional gas consumer councils currently receive a salary of £7,272 in respect of a commitment of two days per week. Regional representatives on the new Gas Consumer Council will receive £3,500 for a commitment of one day per week. The duties of regional representatives will be less onerous than those of chairmen of the current gas councils, since they will not involve chairing regional council meetings nor supervision of staff in regional offices, who will be managed by the director of the new Gas Consumer Council assisted by a field director.

Food Imports (East Europe)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to ensure that any Community prohibition on the import of food and produce from eastern European states applies equally to East Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I have been asked to reply.

As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State told my hon. Friend on 8 May, at column 255, the proposed ban, if agreed, is limited to countries substantially within 1,000 km radius of Chernobyl. The application of the ban will be reviewed by the Community to take account of the latest scientific evidence.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the relative export

price of United Kingdom manufactures each year compared with German export prices for manufactures based on 1976=100 together with the change in the nominal exchange rate since the last year for which relative export prices are available.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 May 1986, c. *523*]: In March 1986 the nominal sterling/deutschmark exchange rate was 14 per cent. higher than the average rate for 1984. The relative export prices are in the following table.

Exports of manufactures—Relative export prices 1976=100*

Year	*Relative export prices*
1976	100
1977	105
1978	107
1979	117
1980	133
1981	145
1982	134
1983	131
1984	138

Note:
* Ratio of United Kingdom to Federal Republic of Germany unit value of exports of manufactures in common currency.
Sources: United Nations.
Department of Trade and Industry

HOME DEPARTMENT

Airports

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is Her Majesty's Government's normal commitment of funds and personnel in establishing immigration controls at an airport newly designated a port of entry; and how many airports have received this status in each of the past 15 years.

Mr. Waddington: The staffing of any port by the immigration service is related to the level of passenger traffic scheduled to arrive at that port. Airports are not normally designated as ports of entry until it has been demonstrated over a period that they meet the criteria for designation. These are that scheduled services carrying substantial numbers of passengers subject to immigration control arrive at the port. Airports were first designated as ports of entry under the Immigration (Ports of Entry) Order 1972 which came into effect on 1 January 1973. The airports designated under that order were:

Ashford,
Belfast,
Birmingham
Bournemouth (Hurn)
Bristol
East Midlands
Edinburgh (Turnhouse)
London–Gatwick
Glamorgan
Glasgow
London–Heathrow
Liverpool
Luton
Lydd
Manchester
Manston
Newcastle
Prestwick
Southampton
Southend
London–Stansted
Tees-side

The Immigration (Ports of Entry) Amendment Order 1975 deleted Ashford and Manston from the list and added Aberdeen and Norwich.

The Immigration (Ports of Entry) Amendment Order 1979 registered a change of name from Glamorgan to Cardiff (Wales).

Immigration Service

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what preparations he is currently making for an extension of detention facilities for use by the immigration service at Harmondsworth; whether he intends to make any improvements in the conditions of such facilities within the Heathrow terminals; and what contingency plans he has made for the effect on the detention facilities available for the immigration service of industrial action by officers in the prison service.

Mr. Waddington: We are reviewing arrangements for persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 including the possible provision of additional detention accommodation at Harmondsworth and the improvement of the facilities at Heathrow in the light of the Government's response to the sixth report from the Home Affairs Committee (Session 1984-85). A variety of contingency plans have been made in case access to prisons was restricted or prison places became unavailable as the result of industrial action by officers of the prison service. These could be applied to detainees under the Immigration Act as to other prisoners.

West Midlands Police

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to what further plans there are for replacing uniformed officers with civilians on paperwork in the West Midlands police force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The West Midlands police authority is continuing to implement a phased programme of civilianisation in the force. The civilian strength on 31 March 1986 was 1,661. I understand that its plans for the current financial year are intended to release up to 100 police officers from administrative and other work which does not require the powers and training of a police officer. Further plans are being formulated for implementation in 1987-88.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to how many hours of police overtime the West Midlands force spent on paperwork in each of the years since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable that this information is not available.

Electoral Rolls

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what precautions are taken, and

checks made, to prevent persons who are not Commonwealth citizens or citizens of the Irish Republic from being registered as voters.

Mr. Mellor: The electoral registration form states that only the names of Commonwealth citizens and citizens of the Irish Republic may be entered and electoral registration officers have powers to insist on the production of documentary evidence on nationality. The new form to be introduced this year will also make it clear that giving false information is an offence. Lists of the people whom it is proposed to include on the electoral register have to be publicly displayed, and any elector who thinks that somebody who is not eligible has been included can object to the registration officer during the period set aside for such objections—28 November to 16 December.

Joint Boards

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish details of the manpower schemes for the first three financial years of the joint boards set up following abolition of the Greater London council and for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The following manpower levels were included in the establishment scheme for the London fire and civil defence authority for the financial year 1986-87 and laid before Parliament on 27 March under the provisions os section 85 of the Local Government Act 1985:

	Number
Fire Service Staff	
Whole-time uniform staff	6,849
Civilian staff	1,181
Control room staff	196
Emergency Planning Staff	41
Central Services Staff	131

The authority is required to submit its proposed schemes for the 1987-88 and 1988-89 financial years by 1 January 1987 and 1 January 1988 respectively, and they will be considered at that time.

News International Plant, Wapping

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many ambulances were called by the Metropolitan police to Wapping on 3 May.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that as a result of police telephone calls nine ambulances attended during the evening.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers from Newham were on duty in Wapping on the night of 3 May.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Seventy-nine.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will hold an inquiry into the events outside the News International plant in Wapping on 3 May.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. Any complaints against the police will be dealt with according to the procedures approved by Parliament. I understand that 65 people have been charged with offences in connection with the disorders. The courts will deal with those cases in the usual way.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were injured outside the News International plant in Wapping on 3 May; and how many needed hospital treatment.

Mr. Giles Shaw: One hundred and seventy five officers were injured, 43 of whom required hospital treatment.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has of the number of members of the public injured outside the News International plant in Wapping on 3 May; and how many required hospital treatment.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner understands that 29 members of the public received hospital treatment. Information about other injuries is not available.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were on duty in connection with the dispute in Wapping on Saturday 3 May; and what was the cost.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police were on duty at Wapping on Saturday 3 May; what was the cost; what has been the total cost of policing this dispute so far; what are the names and ranks of the police officers injured at Wapping on 3 May; what were their injuries; what were the names of the hospitals they were treated in; and what is the date of their return to duty.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner that 1,744 police officers were deployed on the evening of 3 May. One hundred and seventy five officers between and including the ranks of constable and superintendent were injured, the injuries ranging from concussion, cuts and bruises to burns to the head. Those officers whose injuries required hospital treatment were all taken to the London hospital. Information about their return to duty and the cost of police operations on that night and since the dispute began is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the average number of police per day stationed outside the News International works, Wapping, since the industrial dispute began;

(2) what is the total amount of police time spent at the News International works, Wapping, since the industrial dispute started.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 April 1986, c. *302*]: The number of police officers held available for deployment at the News International plant varies from day to day and hour to hour, from a minimum of about 25 to a maximum of about 1,800, depending on the current or likely public order situation. Up to and including 25 April it is estimated that approximately 350,000 police man hours have been spent at or near the plant in connection with the dispute.

PRIME MINISTER

Conservation

Mr. Nicholls asked the Prime Minister what measures her Government have taken to promote or protect the environment; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government have taken many important measures to protect and enhance the environment. The principal ones are as follows.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 has proved to be the most important piece of legislation in its field for many years. It has strengthened measures for the protection of native flora and fauna, and provided powers for the conservation of the countryside including natural habitats which are essential for the survival of wildlife.

Since 1979 we have increased funding for the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council in real terms by 49 and 142 per cent. respectively.

A number of initiatives have recently been taken to integrate environmental objectives into agricultural policies. These include changes to the farm capital grants system to provide clear incentives for environmentally beneficial projects, and statutory powers under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 to control pesticide use and supply.

We have taken an active part in the European Community, including the initiative in measures to eliminate lead from petrol, the agreement on vehicle emissions, the prohibition of trade in endangered species, and the protection of whales and seals from slaughter. We will play our part in the European Year of the Environment 1987.

We have negotiated a European directive requiring environmental assessment of certain major types of project and have recently published a consultation document outlining proposals for implementing it within the context of the town and country planning system.

In 1982 we launched the Mersey basin campaign, a major long-term project involving combined effort by the public, private and voluntary sectors. Its aim is to remedy severe pollution in the water courses of the Mersey basin and to promote matching improvements in the appearance, use and jobs prospects of the water front.

We have supported the development of the groundwork initiative which is dedicated to the regeneration of run-down land at the urban fringe through community effort. Starting in the north-west, groundwork trusts have been established in nine areas; more are in the pipeline.

Regulations have been introduced to control the use of organotin compounds in anti-fouling paints for boats, so as to protect sensitive marine organisms in coastal waters.

We have implemented part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, extending the effluent discharge consent procedure to coastal and estuarial waters.

A hazardous wastes inspectorate has been established within the Department of the Environment.

By the end of 1985 the permitted level of lead in petrol was reduced by over 60 per cent., and important steps have been taken to reduce exposure to lead from other sources including food, water paint and industrial emissions.

We have secured a progressive reduction in radioactive discharges from the BNFL reprocessing plant at Sellafield to less than one sixth of their 1979 levels. On 30 April we announced our intention to impose still tighter controls on discharges and, for the first time, to set specific limits on a wide range of individual radioactive substances.

The Housing and Planning Bill now before Parliament contains a number of proposals designed to improve the protection of the environment. In the circular accompanying the White Paper "Lifting the Burden," published on 16 July 1985, we accepted that quality of the environment was a planning consideration.

The policy of the Government is to achieve the highest environmental standards that are cost-effective and do not place unnecessary burdens on industry. We shall continue to play a full role in Europe and on the wider international stage. We place a high priority on preserving and improving the quality of the environment.

Nuclear Fallout (Emergency Plans)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards creating and uprating emergency plans and procedures for implementation in the event of threat from nuclear fallout.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his question of 8 May at column *216*. Plans and procedures are kept under review, and will be examined in the light of the Chernobyl accident.

Radioactive Contamination

Miss Fookes asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the co-ordination of the activities of the Department of Health and Social Security, the Foreign Office and the Department of the Environment in advising United Kingdom citizens returning from Russia and neighbouring countries at the present time and in the future on radioactive contamination from the Chernobyl disaster.

The Prime Minister: Yes. However, these arrangements are continuously reviewed and can be changed if necessary.

Miss Fookes asked the Prime Minister if she will take steps to set up a scientific committee charged with the responsibility of collecting data on all British citizens in contact with radioactivity from the Chernobyl disaster including the institution of long-term monitoring of the individuals concerned.

The Prime Minister: I am aware of the suggestion that has been made, but we are content with the arrangements made to monitor British citizens affected. In the light of the contamination levels detected, there is no good medical reason to monitor these people further. Should there be any change in circumstances affecting returning British citizens, the arrangements will be adjusted as necessary.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk (Radioactivity)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will compare the normal levels of radioactivity in milk with those measured on Wednesday 30 April, Thursday 1 May, Friday 2 May, Saturday 3 May, Sunday 4 May, Monday 5 May and Tuesday 6 May, respectively; if he will also compare these with the derived emergency reference level for radionuclides in milk; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was (i) the maximum level of radioactivity in the United Kingdom measured in milk in the period 30 April to the latest available date and the date and site of this measurement, (ii) the derived emergency reference level for radioactivity in milk used in the United Kingdom and (iii) the emergency reference level of radioactivity in milk recommended by the International Atomic Energy Agency; and if he will make a statement advising on contingency action in the event of radioactivity above safe levels in milk supplies.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Frozen Food

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 6 May to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, whether he has any proposals to compensate British frozen food manufacturers for the loss of markets in Spain resulting from the increased tariff on frozen vegetables in the Treaty of Accession of Spain.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Servants (Briefcases)

Mr. Hayward asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of providing civil servants with briefcases in each of the last five years.

Mr. Brooke: HMSO estimates the cost at approximately:

	£
1981-82	69,000
1982-83	98,000
1983-84	111,000
1984-85	118,000
1985-86	141,000

Mr. Hayward asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current cost of each briefcase provided to civil servants.

Mr. Brooke: The standard PVC briefcase at present costs £7.36. The standard leathercloth case costs £25.19.

Mr. Hayward asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has reviewed the policy of providing briefcases to civil servants.

Mr. Brooke: I see no reason to do so. Departments are individually responsible for controlling their own expenditure on briefcases and stationery items.

NHS (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received recently about the level of capital expenditure in the National Health Service during the next two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Various representations have been received about the level of capital expenditure in the NHS. The Government have increased provision for NHS capital expenditure by over 20 per cent. in real terms since 1979. Our public expenditure plans set out in Cmnd. 9702 allow for this level to be maintained over the next few years. Forty-three major new hospital schemes, each costing over £5 million, are planned to start over the next three years.

Civil List

Mr. Canavan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount of Civil List expenditure; and who are the beneficiaries.

Mr. Lawson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 18 March 1986, at columns *97-98*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood).

Personal Taxation

Mr. Corrie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the population does not pay income tax in 1986-87 who did pay tax in 1978-79.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 April 1986, c. *38*]: About 1·4 million fewer individuals will pay income tax in 1986-87 than under an indexed 1978-79 regime. This represents about 3 per cent. of the adult population.

Everyman Theatre

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the implications of the abolition of Merseyside council for the funding of the Everyman Theatre in Liverpool.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council has already offered half the sum required to replace the Merseyside county council's funding of the Everyman theatre in 1985-86. It is negotiating with the successor authorities, which are being asked to match the Arts Council contribution, and thus secure the theatre's future.

NCB (Employees)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many people were employed by the National Coal Board at the latest available date.

Mr. David Hunt: I am advised that as at 29 March 1986 some 173,838 persons were employed by the National Coal Board.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many tonnes of spent oxide fuel from Italy have been imported into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: At 31 December 1985, approximately 85 te U of oxide spent fuel had been imported from Italy.

Electricity Generation Costs

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of the current comparative cost of producing electricity from coal, oil, gas, hydroelectric and nuclear power; and if he will give similar figures for 1 January.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall arrange for the CEGB to write to my hon. Friend.

Nuclear Installations

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Energy what contingency arrangements there are for alerting, informing and if necessary evacuating residents in the country in the event of a major radiation leak at a United Kingdom nuclear installation.

Mr. Goodlad: The arrangements are set out in the Health and Safety Executive's booklet "Emergency plans for civil nuclear installations" published by HM Stationery Office in 1982, a copy of which is available in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Radiation

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made as to which European countries are safe for British citizens to visit without risk of radiation sickness arising from the Chernobyl disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Our current advice is that British citizens should avoid visiting Kiev and west Ukraine and Minsk and Byelorussia and Lithuania and north-east Poland unless absolutely necessary. There are no reasons to advise against visiting other areas in western or eastern Europe. Additionally we advise precautions on food and drink in Warsaw, north-east Poland, Lithuania, west Ukraine, Byelorussia and Romania.

We continue to consider our advice on a very regular basis.

Mr. Rory McKenna

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the official title, departmental role and authority to speak on behalf of the European Economic Community of Mr. Rory McKenna, in relation to policy on regional aid from Europe.

Mrs. Chalker: Mr. McKenna is an official of the regional policy directorate of the EC Commission. He is not a Commission spokesman.

Soviet Union (Nuclear Accident)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the United Kingdom is giving to the Soviet Union with regard to the Chernobyl disaster; and what help has been offered but not yet accepted.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom is providing up to 80 heat-resistant suits and up to 110 breathing sets together with a compressor and decontamination unit. These are expected to reach Moscow on 9 May. All other possible assistance has also been offered, but the Soviet authorities have not indicated that they require any assistance.

Uganda

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for the provision of military assistance to Uganda.

Mrs. Chalker: At the request of the new Government of Uganda, the British military advisory and training team in Uganda is to be expanded to a strength of about 30 in order to start a programme of training military instructors of Ugands's national resistance army. The training programme will begin in June.

DEFENCE

North-West England (Jobs)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about the possible relocation of defence jobs to north-west England.

Mr. Lee: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 11 March 1986 at column 802.

Comprehensive Test Ban

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence what military impediments there are to the achievement of a comprehensive test ban.

Mr. Stanley: There would be serious risks to our security interests were we to agree to a comprehensive test ban that was not adequately verifiable. For example, other countries might try to continue a military nuclear weapon testing programme covertly whilst we would not.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has any system which would enable other countries to distinguish cruise missiles carrying nuclear warheads from those carrying conventional warheads.

Mr. Stanley: No.

Rainfall Statistics

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish the rainfall in millimetres for the months of October, November, December, January, February and March for each year since 1976 for each of the following meteorological stations in the county of Cumbria: Keswick Stable Hills, Buttermere water works, Millbeck, How Farm, Hause Gill water works, Fleetwith Pike, Bleaberry Tarn, Stonethwaite, Thirlmere, Honister, Seathwaite, Styhead and Birkside.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is voluminous but I have written to the hon. Member.

USS Nathaniel Green

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he was informed by the United States authorities of the incident in March when USS Nathaniel Green ran aground in the Irish Sea; whether there was any damage to the nuclear propulsion unit; if the Poseidon missiles aboard were armed; what action he took as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The United States authorities informed my Department on 13 March that the USS Nathaniel Green had been damaged. Approval was given for the boat to berth at the Holy Loch facilities for repairs. I understand that the nuclear propulsion system was not damaged. It has been the policy of successive Governments neither to confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear Submarines (Waste Disposal)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received representations from or held consultations with the fishing industry about the siting of dumps to contain the waste from nuclear submarines.

Mr. John Lee: No. However, any views which the fishing industry has to offer would naturally be given careful consideration.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the levels of nerve gas and chemical weapons held by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Stanley: The Soviet Union has a major chemical warfare capability. Its chemical weapons stockpile is assessed to include some 300,000 tonnes of nerve agent alone. It has specialist troops responsible for aspects of nuclear, biological and chemical warfare. Soviet forces are also comprehensively equipped and trained to operate in a chemically contaminated environment. There are no chemical weapons declared to NATO, although the United States possesses a limited and aging retaliatory capability.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Defence which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each have been paid.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *101*] The advertising agencies engaged by the Ministry of Defence during the last five years and the sums paid in each year are as follows:

	£ million
1981-82	
Collett Dickinson Pearce	
Butler Dennis Garland	
A. V. Browne	
J. Walter Thompson	
McCann Erickson	
Young and Rubicam	
Charles Barker	
Rex Stewart & Associates	
Royds	
National Advertising Corporation	
Grand Total	3·513
1982-83	
Collett Dickinson Pearce	
Butler Dennis Garland	
A. V. Browne	
J. Walter Thompson	
McCann Erickson	
Young and Rubicam	
Charles Barker	
Rex Stewart & Associates	
National Advertising Corporation	
Grand Total	2.708
1983-84	
Collett Dickinson Pearce	
Butler Dennis Garland	
A. V. Browne	
J. Walter Thompson	
Dorland & Leo Burnett	
Young and Rubicam	
Charles Barker	
Rex Stewart & Associates	
Grand Total	4·464
1984-85	
Collett Dickinson Pearce	
Butler Dennis Garland	
A. V. Browne	
George Hynes & Partners	
J. Walter Thompson	
Young & Rubicam	
Charles Barker	
Rex Stewart & Associates	
Grand Total	5·838
1985-86	
J. Walter Thompson	
Collett Dickinson Pearce	
Butler Dennis Garland	
George Hynes & Partners	
Young & Rubicam	
Charles Barker	
Rex Stewart & Associates	
Hobsons Ltd	
P. A. Advertising	
Grand Total	6·865

It is not my Department's practice to publish the sums paid to individual contractors.

TRANSPORT

Drink-Driving

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Yyns Môn of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *310*, what extra resources have been notified to him that the police will be allocating during the drink-driving enforcement campaign in May and June.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The current focus on drinking and driving was planned in close consultation with the police. We have not assumed that individual chief officers will be increasing the level of enforcement during the publicity period. The focus is designed to increase awareness that drinking and driving is dangerous and a problem throughout the year. The police, through the traffic committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers, have welcomed this approach as an aid to their own year-round enforcement effort against drinking and driving.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in his Department and the number and ranks of staff reporting to each.

Mr. Ridley: The responsibilities of the deputy secretaries in my Department are as follows:

Deputy Secretary, Highways and Traffic

Highways and traffic policy, the highways programme and maintenance, contracts, and highways and traffic questions in

Greater London. The Chief Highway Engineer's Department. Management of the highways and traffic work of the Department in the regions.

Deputy Secretary, Civil Aviation and Principal Finance Officer

Civil aviation, including international aviation negotiations; and other international transport matters. Public expenditure on transport and financial management and control.

Deputy Secretary, Economics, Statistics and Research and Chief Economic Adviser

Economic advice to the Department; responsibility for the Department's economics Divisions, statistical services and for the planning, formulation and management of the Department's research and scientific programme.

Deputy Secretary, Surface Transport Industries

Matters relating to the rail, road haulage and bus industries and the related nationalised industry boards.

Deputy Secretary, Shipping, Marine, Road and Vehicle Safety and Licensing

Matters relating to shipping policy, marine safety and pollution prevention, ports, driver and vehicle licensing, road and vehicle safety, vehicle and component approval, vehicle testing, driver testing and training, motor vehicle insurance and vehicle excise duty.

Chief Scientific Adviser

Evaluations of scientific issues relevant to the policies of the Department.

Director General of Organisation and Establishments

The Director General of Organisations and Establishments is the Departments' Principal Establishments Officer whose staff provide a common service to both the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment (Central).

At 1 April 1986 the numbers and ranks of staff in the deputy secretary commands (other than common servants with the Department of the Environment) were as shown in the following table. A further 178 Department of Transport staff were not attached to the five commands indicated.

	Highways and Traffic	*Aviation, International and Principal Finance Officer*
GRADE		
Grade 1	—	—
Grade 2	1·0	1·0
Grade 3	4·0	4·0
Grade 4	7·0	2·0
Grade 5	27·0	19·0
Grade 6	50·0	6·0
Grade 7	191·0	43·0
TOTAL OPEN STRUCTURE	280·0	75·0
SEO	45·0	10·0
HEOD	2·0	3·0
HEO	138·0	59·5
AT	—	2·0
EO	273·5	68·0
CO	299·5	36·0
CA	60·0	27·0
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP	818·0	205·5
Economic Adviser	5·0	—
Senior Economic Assistant	—	—
Economic Assistant	1·0	—
TOTAL ECONOMIST GROUP	6·0	0·0
Senior Assistant Statistician	—	—
Assistant Statistician	—	—
TOTAL STATISTICIAN GROUP	0·0	0·0
Senior Information Officer	—	1·0
Information Officer	1·0	—
Assistant Information Officer	—	—
TOTAL INFORMATION GROUP	1·0	1·0
Senior Librarian	—	—
Librarian	—	—
TOTAL LIBRARIAN GROUP	0·0	0·0
Senior Data Processor	3·0	—
Data Processor	2·0	—
Trainee Data Processor	—	—
TOTAL DATA PROCESSING GROUP	5·0	0·0
SPTO	297·5	1·0
HPTO	125·0	—
PTO	54·0	—
Technical Grade 2	—	—
TOTAL P & T GROUP	476·5	1·0
Graphics Officer 2	1·0	—
Graphics Officer 3	—	—
Graphics Officer 4	2·0	—
TOTAL GRAPHICS GROUP	3·0	0·0
Chief Superintendent	—	—
Senior Superintendent	1·0	—
Superintendent	3·0	—
Senior Personal Secretary	5·0	2·0
Personal Secretary	43·0	22·0
Personal Secretary (Trainee)	1·0	—
Specialist Typist	13·0	1·5
Typist	6·0	—
Trainee Typist	—	—
TOTAL SECRETARIAL GROUP	72·0	25·5
Security Officer Grade 2	—	—
Security Officer Grade 4	—	—
Security Officer Grade 5	—	—
TOTAL SECURITY GROUP	0·0	0·0
SSO	7·0	—
HSO	1·0	—
SO	—	—
ASO	1·0	—
TOTAL SCIENTIFIC GROUP	9·0	0·0
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE GRADES	1,390·5	233·0
Senior Grade Draughtsman	1·0	—
Higher Grade Draughtsman	2·0	—
Draughtsman	9·0	—
Drawing Office Assistant	9·0	—
Typographer	—	—
TOTAL CARTOGRAPHIC GROUP	21·0	0·0
TOTAL CLEANING GROUP	—	—
Senior Medical Officer	—	—
Medical Officer	—	—
TOTAL MEDICAL CLASS	0·0	0·0
Senior Messenger	—	—
Messenger	10·0	—
TOTAL MESSENGER GROUP	10·0	0·0
Office Keeper Grade 1	—	—
Office Keeper Grade 2	—	—
Office Keeper Grade 3	—	—
TOTAL OFFICE KEEPER GROUP	0·0	0·0
Senior Paperkeeper	—	—
Paperkeeper	4·0	—
TOTAL PAPERKELPER GROUP	4·0	0·0

	Highways and Traffic	Aviation, International and Principal Finance Officer
Chief Photographer	—	—
Principal Photographer	—	—
Senior Photographer	—	—
TOTAL PHOTOGRAPHER GROUP	0·0	0·0
Chief Photoprinter	—	—
Assistant Chief Photoprinter	—	—
Photoprinter Grade 1	—	—
Photographer Grade 2	1·0	—
TOTAL PHOTOPRINTER GROUP	1·0	0·0
Grade E	—	—
TOTAL PROCESS AND GENERAL SUPERVISORY GROUP	0·0	0·0
Grade B	—	—
Grade C	—	—
Grade D	1·0	—
TOTAL STORES OFFICER GROUP	1·0	0·0
Telephonist	1·5	—
TOTAL GOVERNMENT TELEPHONIST GROUP	1·5	0·0
Teleprinter Operator	—	—
TOTAL TELEPRINTER GROUP	0·0	0·0
TOTAL GENERAL SERVICE GROUPS	38·5	0·0
CHAIRMAN OF TRAFFIC COMMISSIONERS	—	—
Chief Driving Examiner	—	—
Deputy Chief Driving Examiner	—	—
Assistant Chief Driving Examiner	—	—
Supervising Driving Examiner	—	—
Senior Driving Examiner	—	—
Driving Examiner	—	—
TOTAL DRIVING EXAMINER GROUP	0·0	0·0
Senior Traffic Examiner	—	—
Traffic Examiner	—	—
Supervising Traffic Examiner	—	—
TOTAL TRAFFIC EXAMINER GROUP	0·0	0·0
SENIOR PORT PLANNING OFFICER	—	—
EMERGENCY TRANSPORT PLANNING OFFICER	—	—
Senior Inspector of Accidents	—	16·0
Inspector of Accidents	—	3·0
TOTAL INSPECTOR OF ACCIDENTS GROUP	0·0	19·0
PRINCIPAL RADAR ADVISER	—	—
AVIATION SECURITY ADVISER	—	2·0
Inspector of Coastguard	—	—
District Officer (CG)	—	—
Station Officer (CG)	—	—
Coastguard Officers	—	—
TOTAL COASTGUARD GROUP	0·0	0·0
Chief Inspector of Ships Provisions	—	—
Senior Inspector of Ships Provisions	—	—
TOTAL INSPECTOR OF SHIPS PROVISIONS GROUP	0·0	0·0
Engineer and Ship Surveyor	—	—
Nautical Surveyor	—	—
TOTAL SURVEYOR GROUP	0·0	0·0

	Highways and Traffic	Aviation, International and Principal Finance Officer
PACKER	—	—
STOREKEEPER	—	—
ASSISTANT STOREKEEPER	—	—
PORTER/MESSENGER	—	1·0
TOTAL DEPARTMENTAL GRADES	0·0	22·0
TOTAL NON-INDUSTRIALS	1,709·0	330·0
INDUSTRIALS	4	—
TOTAL	1,713·0	330·0

	Economics, Statistics and Research	Surface Transport Industries
GRADE		
Grade 1	—	—
Grade 2	1·0	1·0
Grade 3	1·0	4·0
Grade 4	2·0	1·0
Grade 5	14·0	11·0
Grade 6	23·0	8·0
Grade 7	101·5	43·5
TOTAL OPEN STRUCTURE	142·5	68·5
SEO	3·0	10·0
HEOD	—	—
HEO	17·0	55·0
AT	—	3·0
EO	47·0	105·0
CO	67·0	420·5
CA	15·0	474·0
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP	149·0	1,067·5
Economic Adviser	11·0	—
Senior Economic Assistant	5·0	—
Economic Assistant	2·0	—
TOTAL ECONOMIST GROUP	18·0	0·0
Senior Assistant Statistician	4·0	—
Assistant Statistician	2·0	—
TOTAL STATISTICIAN GROUP	6·0	0·0
Senior Information Officer	—	—
Information Officer	1·0	—
Assistant Information Officer	—	—
TOTAL INFORMATION GROUP	1·0	0·0
Senior Librarian	1·0	—
Librarian	1·0	—
TOTAL LIBRARIAN GROUP	2·0	0·0
Senior Data Processor	—	—
Data Processor	3·5	—
Trainee Data Processor	—	—
TOTAL DATA PROCESSING GROUP	3·5	0·0
SPTO	2·0	15·0
HPTO	6·0	—
PTO	18·0	—
Technical Grade 2	—	—
TOTAL P & T GROUP	26·0	15·0
Graphics Officer 2	1·0	—
Graphics Officer 3	2·0	—
Graphics Officer 4	1·0	—
TOTAL GRAPHICS GROUP	4·0	0·0

	Economics, Statistics and Research	Surface Transport Industries
Chief Superintendent	—	—
Senior Superintendent	2·0	—
Superintendent	—	12·0
Senior Personal Secretary	3·0	1·0
Personal Secretary	25·0	27·0
Personal Secretary (Trainee)	—	—
Specialist Typist	4·5	22·5
Typist	5·0	16·5
Trainee Typist	2·0	—
TOTAL SECRETARIAL GROUP	41·5	79·0
Security Officer Grade 2	—	—
Security Officer Grade 4	—	—
Security Officer Grade 5	—	—
TOTAL SECURITY GROUP	0·0	0·0
SSO	78·0	—
HSO	98·5	—
SO	55·5	—
ASO	17·0	—
TOTAL SCIENTIFIC GROUP	249·0	0·0
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE GRADES	500·0	1,161·5
Senior Grade Draughtsman	—	—
Higher Grade Draughtsman	—	—
Draughtsman	—	—
Drawing Office Assistant	1·0	—
Typographer	1·0	—
TOTAL CARTOGRAPHIC GROUP	2·0	0·0
TOTAL CLEANING GROUP	0·0	11·0
Senior Medical Officer	—	—
Medical Officer	—	—
TOTAL MEDICAL CLASS	0·0	0·0
Senior Messenger	—	5·0
Messenger	—	34·5
TOTAL MESSENGER GROUP	0·0	39·5
Office Keeper Grade 1	—	1·0
Office Keeper Grade 2	—	1·0
Office Keeper Grade 3	—	1·0
TOTAL OFFICE KEEPER GROUP	0·0	3·0
Senior Paperkeeper	—	3·0
Paperkeeper	—	28·5
TOTAL PAPERKEEPER GROUP	0·0	31·5
Chief Photographer	1·0	—
Principal Photographer	4·0	—
Senior Photographer	10·0	—
TOTAL PHOTOGRAPHER GROUP	15·0	0·0
Chief Photoprinter	—	—
Assistant Chief Photoprinter	1·0	—
Photoprinter Grade 1	0·5	2·5
Photoprinter Grade 2	1·5	2·0
TOTAL PHOTOPRINTER GROUP	3·0	4·5
Grade E	1·0	—
TOTAL PROCESS AND GENERAL SUPERVISORY GROUP	1·0	0·0
Grade B	—	—
Grade C	—	—
Grade D	1·0	—
TOTAL STORES OFFICER GROUP	1·0	0·0
Telephonist	3·0	6·0
TOTAL GOVERNMENT TELEPHONIST GROUP	3·0	6·0
Teleprinter Operator	—	—
TOTAL TELEPRINTER GROUP	0·0	0·0
TOTAL GENERAL SERVICE GROUPS	25·0	95·5
CHAIRMAN OF TRAFFIC COMMISSIONERS	—	8·0
Chief Driving Examiner	—	—
Deputy Chief Driving Examiner	—	—
Assistant Chief Driving Examiner	—	—
Supervising Driving Examiner	—	—
Senior Driving Examiner	—	—
Driving Examiner	—	—
TOTAL DRIVING EXAMINER GROUP	0·0	0·0
Senior Traffic Examiner	—	45·0
Traffic Examiner	—	168·0
Supervising Traffic Examiner	—	12·0
TOTAL TRAFFIC EXAMINER GROUP	0·0	225·0
SENIOR PORT PLANNING OFFICER	—	—
EMERGENCY TRANSPORT PLANNING OFFICER	—	—
Senior Inspector of Accidents	—	—
Inspector of Accidents	—	—
TOTAL INSPECTOR OF ACCIDENTS GROUP	0·0	0·0
PRINCIPAL RADAR ADVISER	—	—
AVIATION SECURITY ADVISER	—	—
Inspector of Coastguard	—	—
District Officer (CG)	—	—
Station Officer (CG)	—	—
Coastguard Officers	—	—
TOTAL COASTGUARD GROUP	0·0	0·0
Chief Inspector of Ships Provisions	—	—
Senior Inspector of Ships Provisions	—	—
TOTAL INSPECTOR OF SHIPS PROVISION GROUPS	0·0	0·0
Engineer and Ship Surveyor	—	—
Nautical Surveyor	—	—
TOTAL SURVEYOR GROUP	0·0	0·0
PACKER	—	—
STOREKEEPER	—	—
ASSISTANT STOREKEEPER	—	—
PORTER/MESSENGER	—	7·5
TOTAL DEPARTMENTAL GRADES	0·0	240·5
TOTAL NON-INDUSTRIALS	667·5	1,566·0
INDUSTRIALS	—	116·0
TOTAL	667·5	1,682·0

	Shipping, Marine, Road and Vehicle Safety and Licensing
GRADE	
Grade 1	1·0
Grade 2	3·0
Grade 3	4·0

	Shipping, Marine, Road and Vehicle Safety and Licensing
Grade 4	17·0
Grade 5	44·0
Grade 6	197·0
Grade 7	266·0
TOTAL OPEN STRUCTURE	
SEO	84·0
HEOD	—
HEO	311·0
AT	—
EO	778·5
CO	1,875·0
CA	2,309·5
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP	5,358·0
Economic Adviser	—
Senior Economic Assistant	—
Economic Assistant	—
TOTAL ECONOMIST GROUP	0·0
Senior Assistant Statistician	—
Assistant Statistician	—
TOTAL STATISTICIAN GROUP	0·0
Senior Information Officer	1·0
Information Officer	—
Assistant Information Officer	—
TOTAL INFORMATION GROUP	1·0
Senior Librarian	—
Librarian	—
TOTAL LIBRARIAN GROUP	0·0
Senior Data Processor	133·0
Data Processor	566·5
Trainee Data Processor	3·0
TOTAL DATA PROCESSING GROUP	702·5
SPTO	79·0
HPTO	120·0
PTO	450·0
Technical Grade 2	1·0
TOTAL P & T GROUP	650·0
Graphics Officer 2	—
Graphics Officer 3	—
Graphics Officer 4	—
TOTAL GRAPHICS GROUP	0·0
Chief Superintendent	1·0
Senior Superintendent	4·0
Superintendent	4·0
Senior Personal Secretary	4·0
Personal Secretary	37·0
Personal Secretary (Trainee)	—
Specialist Typist	58·5
Typist	92·0
Trainee Typist	2·5
TOTAL SECRETARIAL GROUP	203·0
Security Officer Grade 2	2·0
Security Officer Grade 4	9·0
Security Officer Grade 5	38·0
TOTAL SECURITY GROUP	49·0
SSO	2·0
HSO	1·0
SO	—
ASO	—
TOTAL SCIENTIFIC GROUP	3·0
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE GRADES	6,966·5
Senior Grade Draughtsman	
Higher Grade Draughtsman	
Draughtsman	
Drawing Office Assistant	
Typographer	
TOTAL CARTOGRAPHIC GROUP	0·0
TOTAL CLEANING GROUP	4·0
Senior Medical Officer	1·0
Medical Officer	5·5
TOTAL MEDICAL CLASS	6·5
Senior Messenger	20·0
Messenger	143·0
TOTAL MESSENGER GROUP	163·0
Office Keeper Grade 1	
Office Keeper Grade 2	2·0
Office Keeper Grade 3	4·0
TOTAL OFFICE KEEPER GROUP	6·0
Senior Paperkeeper	1·0
Paperkeeper	11·0
TOTAL PAPERKEEPER GROUP	12·0
Chief Photographer	
Principal Photographer	
Senior Photographer	
TOTAL PHOTOGRAPHER GROUP	0·0
Chief Photoprinter	1·0
Assistant Chief Photoprinter	2·0
Photoprinter Grade 1	11·0
Photoprinter Grade 2	6·0
TOTAL PHOTOPRINTER GROUP	20·0
Grade E	
TOTAL PROCESS AND GENERAL SUPERVISORY GROUP	0·0
Grade B	1·0
Grade C	1·0
Grade D	3·0
TOTAL STORES OFFICER GROUP	5·0
Telephonist	2·0
TOTAL GOVERNMENT TELEPHONIST GROUP	2·0
Teleprinter Operator	1·0
TOTAL TELEPRINTER GROUP	1·0
TOTAL GENERAL SERVICE GROUPS	219·5
CHAIRMAN OF TRAFFIC COMMISSIONERS	
Chief Driving Examiner	1·0
Deputy Chief Driving Examiner	2·0
Assistant Chief Driving Examiner	9·0
Supervising Driving Examiner	87·0
Senior Driving Examiner	395·0
Driving Examiner	1,136·0
TOTAL DRIVING EXAMINER GROUP	1,630·0
Senior Traffic Examiner	
Traffic Examiner	
Supervising Traffic Examiner	
TOTAL TRAFFIC EXAMINER GROUP	0·0
SENIOR PORT PLANNING OFFICER	
EMERGENCY TRANSPORT PLANNING OFFICER	
Senior Inspector of Accidents	
Inspector of Accidents	
TOTAL INSPECTOR OF ACCIDENTS GROUP	0·0
PRINCIPAL RADAR ADVISER	1·0

	Shipping, Marine, Road and Vehicle Safety and Licensing
AVIATION SECURITY ADVISER	0·0
Inspector of Coastguard	8·0
District Officer (CG)	27·0
Station Officer (CG)	59·0
Coastguard Officers	422·0
TOTAL COASTGUARD GROUP	516·0
Chief Inspector of Ships Provisions	1·0
Senior Inspector of Ships Provisions	2·0
TOTAL INSPECTOR OF SHIPS PROVISIONS GROUP	3·0
Engineer and Ship Surveyor	79·0
Nautical Surveyor	34·0
TOTAL SURVEYOR GROUP	113·0
PACKER	15·0
STOREKEEPER	5·0
ASSISTANT STOREKEEPER	8·0
PORTER/MESSENGER	12·0
TOTAL DEPARTMENTAL GRADES	2,303·0
TOTAL NON-INDUSTRIALS	9,755·0
INDUSTRIALS	394·0
TOTAL	10,149·0

Vehicle Registration Prefix

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is giving consideration to abandoning the present annual changing of vehicle registration prefixes.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have no plans to do so. The retention of the vehicle age identification system is strongly supported by the Police because it is often an important element in tracing a vehicle where a witness cannot recall the complete number, and in the enforcement of vehicle testing requirements. The age identifier is also supported by consumer protection organisations and by large sections of the motor trade who consider that it helps to sell more new vehicles.

Coaches (Speed Governors)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects that the mandatory fitting of coach speed governors will come into force; if their use will be extended to heavy goods vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Discussions with vehicle and equipment manufacturers and vehicle user groups are underway at the British Standards Institution. I expect a British Standard to be agreed by the end of the year. I will be consulting the coach industry on a timetable to phase in the fitting of the equipment as rapidly as possible and I expect the first vehicles to be fitted during 1987.

Some heavy goods vehicles are voluntarily fitted with speed limiters. We have no plans at present to introduce any legal requirements.

Car Rallying (Safety)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will discuss with the Royal Automobile Club the safety and conduct of off road car rallying; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Stringent rules governing safety and conduct are imposed by the Royal Automobile Club Motor Sports Association Ltd. when authorising rallies under the provisions of the Road Traffic Act 1972. The safety record for such events in the United Kingdom is good. There are no plans at present to open discussions.

Motorways (Signs)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider the inclusion on motorway road signs alongside the miles to destination the kilometre equivalent.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No decision has been taken about a change to the metric measurement of distances in this country although in accordance with EEC directive 80 181 this is to be reviewed by 31 December 1989. Parliament will be consulted before any decision is taken. Meanwhile my right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce dual signing of distances.

Manpower Schemes, London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish details of the manpower schemes for the first three financial years of the joint boards set up following abolition of the Greater London Council and for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Ridley: There are no such boards.

LRT (Bus Routes)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many bus routes have been entirely withdrawn by London Regional Transport since June 1984.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter for LRT.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people are employed on bus services operated under tender to London Regional Transport, excluding those contracted to London Buses Ltd.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter for London Regional Transport and those companies which supply tendered services.

London Transport Services (Staff)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many people were employed by London Underground in 1984, 1985 and 1986, respectively; and what financial savings have been made from the reduction in staffing levels;

(2) how many people were employed by London Buses in 1984, 1985 and 1986, respectively; and what financial savings have been made from the reduction in staffing levels;

(3) how many people were employed by London Regional Transport and its subsidiaries in 1984, 1985 and 1986, respectively; and what financial savings have been made from the reduction in staffing levels.

Mr. David Mitchell: Employment statistics for LRT, London Buses and London Underground may be found in LRT's annual business plans. More efficient use of manpower contributes to the more cost effective services which the plans also report.

Mr. Kenneth Joyner (Salary)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the salary of London Regional Transport board member Mr. Kenneth Joyner on 7 March 1985 and on 31 March 1985, respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell: £4,500 per annum on both dates.

LRT (Board Salaries)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the salaries of the board members of London Regional Transport; and if he has any plans to increase them.

Mr. David Mitchell: Current annual salaries of the board members of the LRT are as follows:

Member	*Salary* £	*Time commitment*
Chairman		
Dr. Keith Bright	55,000	Full time
Deputy Chairman		
Mr. David Hardy	14,000	1½ days per week
Full time members		
Dr. Tony Ridley	44,000	Full time
Mr. John Telford Beasley		
Mr. Barry Dale		
Part time members		
Sir Neil Shields	17,000	2 days per week
Mr. Keith Brown	5,000	½ day per week
Miss Eileen Cole		
Dr. Stephen Glaister		
Mr. Kenneth Joyner		
Mrs. Helen Robinson		
Miss Patricia Steel		

These salaries are subject to annual review.

LRT (Revenue Subsidy)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with London Regional Transport on further reductions in its revenue subsidy; if he plans to issue directives requiring it to operate with zero revenue subsidy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport's performance in bringing public transport services under efficient management means that the industry will need less revenue subsidy than was assumed in 1984 when Government objectives were set. I welcome the indications from LRT that if current performance is maintained there are prospects of relieving ratepayers and taxpayers of the burden of revenue subsidy.

Public Transport Employees (Assaults)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the study of assaults on bus staff in London was first announced; what submissions have been received; and when a report will be published.

Mr. David Mitchell: The study of assaults on bus staff is a national study and is not confined to London. Nominations for working group members were first invited in June 1984. All sides of the bus industry have been involved in regular meetings throughout 1984 and 1985. I have received no other submissions. A report and summary of the findings are due to be published on 19 May.

BR (Station Staff)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were employed as station staff by British Rail in Greater London in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986 respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a management matter for the British Railways Board. We do not have the information requested.

London Buses (Deregulation)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with London Regional Transport and its subsidiary London Buses on the deregulation of bus services in London.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have made clear that it is our firm intention to extend deregulation. The timetable for this is under review.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to deregulate bus services in London.

Mr. David Mitchell: Yes.

Bus Mileage, London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the level of bus mileage secured by London Transport and London Regional Transport in 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986, respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell: The annual bus mileage operated by London Regional Transport—formerly the London Transport Executive—between 1983 and 1985 was as follows:

	Million Miles
1983	164
1984	167
1985	164

The 1985 figure is provisional, and excludes services operated for LRT by operators other than London Buses Ltd. (less than 1 million bus miles). LRT plans to maintain mileage broadly at its present level during the current year.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the recorded level of passenger mileage on bus services secured by London Transport and London Regional Transport in January 1983, June 1983, January 1984, June 1984, January 1985, June 1985, and January 1986, respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department does not collect information at this level of detail. I suggest that the hon. Member asks LRT.

GLC Lorry Ban

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received for and against the Greater London Council lorry ban from *(a)* individuals, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* other organisations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The GLC lorry ban is now a matter for the London boroughs. I do not know what representations they may have received. At May 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, we had received 2,575 representations against and four in favour of the ban. 507 were from individuals, seven from local authorities and 2,071 from other organisations.

Roads (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the four London road assessment studies are to be published.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Traffic surveys are now going ahead to complete the collection of data on transport-related problems in these corridors. This data will be shared with the boroughs concerned. We hope to publish reports on this phase of the work in the autumn.

Traffic Staffs, London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were employed by the Greater London council in December 1985 and are currently employed by the London Residuary Body working on *(a)* bus priority measures, *(b)* pedestrian measures, *(c)* cycling measures and *(d)* traffic signals.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Under the terms of the contract with the London Residuary Body in respect of functions that fall to us, it is agreed that the LRB traffic control systems unit should have 89 posts to handle the matters quoted. GLC staffing was the responsibility of the GLC.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were employed by the Greater London road and traffic division of his Department in December 1983, December 1984, December 1985 and April 1986, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The figures are as follows:

	Number
1 December 1983	94·5
1 December 1984	101·5
1 December 1985	135·5
1 April 1986	147·5

BREL, Springburn

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to visit the British Rail Engineering Ltd. workshops at Springburn.

Mr. David Mitchell: I visited the BREL, Springburn, works in 1984; I have currently no plans for a further visit.

London Transport Passenger Group

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was discussed at the meeting of the London Transport Passenger Group on 22 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The meeting discussed progress towards the longer term objectives set out in my right hon. Friend's letter of 24 July 1984 to the chairmen of BR and LRT.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many times the London Transport Passenger Group has met; who has attended the meetings; what subjects have been discussed; and what measures have been adopted to co-ordinate London Regional Transport and British Rail services.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since its inception in July 1984, there have been six meetings of the London Passenger Transport Group which comprises my right hon. Friend, myself, and the chairmen of BR and LRT, with appropriate officials in attendance. The group discusses the issues set out in my right hon. Friends's letter of 24 July 1984 to the two chairmen. Achievements so far include the introduction of several joint marketing initiatives, including Capitalcard; the development of a programme of interchange improvements; and improved co-operation in provision for disabled people, including publication of the leaflet "A Helping Hand Across London".

Single-manned Buses (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what meetings have taken place between the London Regional Passengers Committee and London Buses and London Regional Transport to discuss the issue of one-person operated buses.

Mr. David Mitchell: The LRPC, London Buses and LRT are entirely free to meet each other whenever they wish. I would not expect to be informed of such meetings.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations have been received by the London Regional Passengers Committee for and against the conversion of bus routes in London to one-person operated buses.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is entirely a matter for the LRPC.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received for and against the use of one-person operation in London by bus services secured by London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend receives representations from time to time. The use of one-person operated buses in London is, however, an operational matter for London Regional Transport and its subsidiary London Buses Limited.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any communication from the London Regional Passengers Committee on the conversion of bus routes in London to one-person operated buses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received a letter from the chairman of the London Regional Passengers Committee on this topic.

London Underground

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the stations on the London Underground currently equipped with close circuit television systems for the detection of crime.

Mr. David Mitchell: There are forty-one stations equipped with closed circuit television for surveillance purposes.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the stations on the London Underground which are shortly to be equipped with close-circuit television systems for the detection of crime.

Mr. David Mitchell: Recently authorisation for a further 37 stations to be equipped with CCTV was given. The detection of crime will form part of the equipment's role.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many crimes were detected on the London Underground by closed circuit television in 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: No separate record is kept of crimes detected by CCTV. It is used on a day-to-day basis by the British Transport police for monitoring parts of the Underground particularly prone to pick-pocketing and crimes of violence. A dual benefit is gained from the improved deployment of resources and more discreet surveillance. In this role the use of this facility has been important in the chain of events leading to the arrest and prosecution of offenders. There is also reason to believe that the use of CCTV has a marked deterrent effect on potential offenders on stations where it is in use.

Underground Trains (Single-manning)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he has had from the Railway Inspectorate on the one-person operation of deep level underground trains and what advice has been given by the Railway Inspectorate to London Regional Transport and London Underground on the matter.

Mr. David Mitchell: Following the successful introduction of one-person operation of trains on the Victoria and sub-surface lines, London Underground Ltd. is proposing to extend this method of working to other deep-level tube lines. Although London Underground Ltd. is responsible for the safe operation of its railways—and any decision on the manning of trains must be its—it consulted the railways inspectorate when establishing the arrangements for one-person operation of the Victoria and sub-surface lines, and is currently discussing with the inspectorate its proposals for the deep-level tubes. The inspectorate advises my right hon. Friend as necessary on developments affecting safety on the railways.

Rail Mileage (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the annual level of passenger train mileage run on British Rail's London inner suburban services in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986;

(2) what, using February 1980 as a base level of 100, was the average level of fares charged on British Rail's London inner surburban services in 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986;

(3) what, measured against the retail price index, was the average level of fares charged on British Rail's London inner suburban services in 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information sent to me by British Rail does not distinguish between inner and outer suburban services.

LRT (Fares)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what, measured against the retail price index, was the average level of fares charged on London Regional Transport services in December 1984, February 1985 and February 1986;

(2) what, using February 1984 as a base level of 100, was the average level of fares charged on London Regional Transport services in December 1984, February 1985 and February 1986.

Mr. David Mitchell: The appropriate base for a comparison of average fares is the last set of fare changes approved by the GLC in May 1983. The following table shows the information the hon. Member seeks, in these terms:

	Cash Fares	*Fares, Adjusted in relation to RPI*
June 1983	100	100
February 1984	100	97·3
December 1984	100	93·7
February 1985	108·3	100
February 1986	115·1	101·1

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what using February 1984 as a base level of 100, was the cost of an adult off-peak bus fare on London Regional Transport services in December 1984, February 1985 and February 1986;

(2) what, using February 1984 as a base level of 100, was the cost of a child bus fare on London Regional Transport services in December 1984, February 1985 and February 1986.

Mr. David Mitchell: Particular levels of fare are matters for London Regional Transport.

London Underground (Crime Study)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the study on crime on the London Underground was first announced; what submissions have been received; and when a report will be published.

Mr. David Mitchell: The study of crime on the Underground was announced on 8 January this year at the Prime Minister's seminar on crime prevention. So far seven submissions have been received from bodies and individuals not directly involved in the study. I expect to receive a report by the end of July.

Heathrow Airport (Security)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the new procedures requiring

passengers for Israel to queue in the public area of terminal 1, Heathrow airport, commenced; what assessment he has made of the security implications of such passengers being visible in such a public area for a prolonged period of time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since the El Al operation was moved to terminal 1 in January, the check-in and security procedures for passengers to Israel have been carried out within a separate area screened off from the public concourse. In recent weeks the security procedures have been stepped up, and I am informed that on occasions the resulting delays have caused the queue to tail back beyond the entrance to the dedicated area. My security advisers will be discussing possible ways of preventing this with the British Airports Authority. In the meantime, the area continues to be kept under careful police surveillance.

North Devon Link Road

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to begin on stage 2B of the North Devon link road from South Molton to Barnstaple.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We hope the construction can start next year, subject to satisfactory completion of the remaining statutory procedures.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits (Coventry)

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many tenants in no-fines dwellings in the Coventry North-East constituency are in receipt of additional heating allowances.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information requested is not available.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if it remains the policy of Her Majesty's Government that the boundaries of district health authorities shall be conterminous with the local authorities' services; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy not to sanction the amalgamation of any two district authorities where the boundaries of the resulting authority would not be conterminous with the local authorities' services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: It is clearly sensible that, wherever possible, health authority boundaries should be conterminous with those of local authorities. I do not think that it would be right to attempt to be prescriptive, however, as there may be good reasons why this might not be feasible or desirable in individual cases.

Statutory Sick Pay Scheme

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans his Department has to review the operation of the statutory sick pay scheme since April 1983 in the light of the criticisms contained in the new report published by the Disability Alliance ERA, Leicester Rights Centre and the Leicester city council low pay campaign, copies of which were sent to him; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. and learned Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the spending per capita in the Leicester health authority area at the latest available date; and what is the comparable figure for the other health authorities within the Trent region;

(2) what is the spending per capita in the Trent region at the latest available date; and what is the comparable level of spending in the other regions of England and Wales.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Primary Care (Report)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much it cost to prepare the Binder Hamlyn report on controlling the costs of primary care.

Mr. Hayhoe: £87,400.

Perinatal Mortality

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest information available within his Department on perinatal mortality in 1985.

Mr. Whitney: The latest information is given in the table.

Perinatal mortality: number and rate, England and Wales 1985 (provisional)

	*Perinatal deaths**	*Rate per 1,000 total live and stillbirths*
	6,498	9·84

* Perinatal deaths: stillbirths and deaths in the first week of life.

Radiation Levels

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies have been made of the amount of radiation recorded in Britain arising from the Chernobyl incident; what assessment has been made, or is to be made, of the implications of that amount of radiation recorded for (i) the future incidence of radiation-induced congenital abnormalities and (ii) the incidence of radiation-induced cancers over the next 30 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We are advised that the levels of radiation arising from the Chernobyl incident in air, water and milk have been monitored continuously, are very low, and would result in doses to the public well below internationally accepted limits.

For any individual the additional risk of developing radiation-induced cancer is so small as to be negligible and no increase in cases of radiation-induced congenital abnormalities would be expected.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the extent and

pattern of consumption of drugs no longer prescribable on the National Health Service following his introduction of the limited list.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available.

Hospitals (Thefts)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will take steps to combat the lack of reporting of thefts in hospitals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will issue a circular to hospital authorities urging action to make staff aware of the possibility of theft and encouraging them to report all incidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Steps have already been taken to ensure that all health authorities are aware of the need for effective action to minimise losses through theft, and for staff to play a full part in minimising opportunities for theft and reporting all incidents which do occur. All health authorities have drawn up security strategies, as they were asked to do in health circular HC(82)19. In December 1984 they were sent copies of the NHS security manual prepared by the National Association of Health Authorities. This gives very full practical advice and was commended by the Department in Health notice HN(84)26. Authorities have subsequently been reminded of the importance of preventing theft in their premises and of the need for losses to be recorded accurately. The effectiveness of authorities' security strategies and the application of more rigorous accounting procedures for losses introduced for 1984-85 financial year will be monitored, and further action to secure improvements will be taken where necessary.

Nurses

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of nurses failed to complete their training in the latest year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Judicial Reviews

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of judicial reviews in which his Department has been involved since 1 March 1974; and on how many occasions the court of final recourse has found against him.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 April 1986, c. *276*]: From 1 March 1974 to the end of 1978 there were 54 applications for leave to seek a judicial review and the corresponding proceedings prior to 1977 when judicial review was introduced. From 1979 to date there have been a further 38 applications, but since 1979 the litigation brought against the Department has been dealt with by the solictors' office to the Department and the Treasury Solicitor and the 38 cases are those in which the Department's solicitors' office has been involved. Information about the outcome of proceedings brought between 1974 and 1983 and the number of applications dealt with by the Treasury Solicitor since 1979 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Information about the outcome of judicial proceedings against the Secretary of State for Social Services since the beginning of 1984 is as follows:

	Heard by court of first instance	*Decisions* in favour of*	*against*
		the Secretary of State	
1984	4	3	1
1985	8	4	4
1986	1	1	—

* Decisions given either by the court of first instance or on appeal.

Maternity Allowance

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the responses to the consultation on statutory maternity allowance supported the proposals for payment of maternity allowance by employers; and how many opposed it.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 May 1986, c. *514*]: Of 90 responses received, 10 were broadly favourable; these included the Social Security Advisory Committee and, with some reservations, the Equal Opportunities Commission. Twenty five expressed no overall view. Fifty five were broadly opposed; these included the CBI and the TUC. The revised proposals for the statutory maternity pay scheme sought to take account to the comments received, including in particular the concern expressed that the original proposals would have led to firms having to operate two separate schemes for income-replacement during maternity absence.

Disabled People (Motor Cars)

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the expert individuals and organisations in the field of road transport and disability whom he consulted regarding the issue of automatic gear boxes for right leg amputees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *76*]: The British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association, Motability and Banstead Place Mobility Centre have been consulted about the issue of automatic gear boxes to right leg amputees.

When a war pensioner receiving war pensioner's mobility supplement obtains a car through Motability, the Department can make a grant for adaptations, including the provision of an automaic gear box, provided they are medically essential to enable him to drive. We appreciate the view of the organisations we have consulted that right leg amputees would find an automatic gear box helpful, but the possibility of hand-operated controls means that it cannot be said to be medically essential in all cases. We do, however, give each individual application careful and sympathetic consideration.

Iodine Tablets

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) who holds stocks of iodine tablets;

(2) how many iodine tablets are in stock per head of population and per head of population under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 May 1986, c. *233*]: Stocks of potassium iodate tablets are held at all nuclear installations and at some nearby police stations and hospitals. These are specifically for issue to staff and to people living in the vicinity should an accident occur in which radioactive iodine is released.

Small stocks of potassium iodide tablets are held by the manufacturer and some pharmacists and hospitals for medical purposes unrelated to an accidental release of radioactive materials.

In excess of 2 million potassium iodate tablets are held to issue to people in the vicinity of a serious nuclear accident which releases radioactive iodine while they are being evacuated.

SCOTLAND

Road Traffic Offences

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing *(a)* for Scotland and *(b)* for the sheriffdom of Linlithgow (i) the number of convictions for road traffic offences resulting in death or serious injury and (ii) a breakdown on sentences of conviction for such offences by fine, community services order and custodial sentences.

Mr. John MacKay: Information on causing death by reckless driving is given in the table. Offences where serious injury results cannot be separately identified.

Causing death by reckless driving 1985 (Provisional)

	Scotland	*Sheriffdom of Linlithgow*
Persons against whom a charge was proved	29	1
Sentence:		
Fine	11	—
Community Service Order	4	1
Imprisonment	12	—
Young Offenders Institution	1	—
Admonished	1	—

PSA Development, Coatbridge

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he proposes to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Monklands, West of 22 April relating to the Property Services Agency development at South Circular Road/Exchange Place, Coatbridge.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend replied to the hon. Member on Thursday 8 May 1986.

Derelict Land

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 3 February, *Official Report*, column *54*, if the joint exercise between his Department and local authorities on cataloguing derelict land in Scotland will include a separate calculation of the amount of derelict land attributable to coal mining activities; when the exercise will be completed; and when he expects to publish figures.

Mr. Ancram: As I explained in answer to the previous question to which the hon. Member has referred, the purpose of the joint exercise which the Scottish Development Department has been conducting with local authorities is to assess what information is available on vacant, derelict and underused land. It is now clear that the information held by local authorities is not comprehensive nor consistently calculated, and accordingly the Scottish Development Agency, in conjunction with the Scottish Development Department, has recently commissioned consultants to consider preparing, and testing, a methodology for use by local authorities generally, in conjunction with the agency, for the collection, analysis and updating of data on the extent of vacant, derelict and underused land in their areas. The consultancy will be completed later this year, but at this stage it is not possible to indicate when any revised system of recording vacant, derelict and underused land might be implemented or what detailed information such a system might provide.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what total acreage of reclaimed derelict land in Scotland in 1975, and for each subsequent year to 1985, has been attributable to coal mining activities;

(2) how much derelict land has been reclaimed by regional area in Scotland for each year from 1975 to 1985; how much funding was available for each year; and if any year was underspent.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon a possible.

Radiation Levels

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what the levels of background radiation for each region of Scotland have been on a daily basis; and what are normal radiation levels, from the period when the fallout from Chernobyl first reached Scotland to the latest available date.

Mr. Ancram: Information is not available in the form requested. In normal circumstances environmental dose rates vary significantly from one part of Scotland to another according to several factors, including the local geology. Typical values are in the range 0·05 to 0·15 micro-Sievert/hour. The levels at four locations where regular measurements have been made as part of the surveillance of the fallout from the Chernobyl accident are as set out:

Location	*3 May*	*4 May*	*5 May*	*6 May*	*7 May*	*8 May*
TORNESS						
East Lothian	0·10*	0·11	0·11	0·10	0·10	—
DOUNREAY						
Caithness	0·15	0·25	—	0·25	0·20	—
HUNTERSTON						
Cunninghame	0·16	0·27	0·25	0·25	—	—

Locati	3 May	4 May	5 May	6 May	7 May	8 May
CHAPELCROSS						
Dumfries & Galloway	0·10	0·25	—	—	—	0·25

*Figures are in micro-Sieverts per hour.

The results show the increase due to the activity deposited on the ground. This increase is attributable mainly to short-lived radioactivity and is of little significance in terms of doses to people and animals.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by site and county all opencast coalmining applications received since 1 January 1984, stating in each case whether authorisation has been granted, refused or is still pending; and if he will list separately for each approved case, and for each refused or as yet unauthorised case, the tonnage per year to be mined and the time period requested or authorised.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

Area	Site	Tonnage and period*	Status
Motherwell District	Fernieshaw	67,000 tonnes to be worked for a period of three years	Authorised
Falkirk District	Roughcastle	190,000 tonnes to be worked for a period of four years	Authorised
Dumfries and Galloway District	Libry Moor	1·7 million tonnes to be worked for a period of nine years	Authorised
Dunfermline District	Thornyhill	450,000 tonnes to be worked for a period of three years	Pending

* The tonnages authorised are for the whole period of authorisation. Tonnages per year have not been stipulated.

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what discussions he has had with the water and district authorities in those areas where the four proposed nuclear waste sites are located;

(2) what recent consultations he has had with representatives of local bodies in the areas currently being investigated as potential nuclear waste disposal sites;

(3) whether he has now held consultations with the local government authorities covering the four disposal sites suggested by NIREX.

Mrs. Rumbold: All county and district authorities, and the water authority, within whose areas a site falls, have been consulted on the draft of the special development order intended to authorise site investigations. Other bodies were also consulted. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I have also met affected local authorities and protest groups. Further meetings are planned.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what the cost is to Her Majesty's Government of carrying out exploratory work on the potential nuclear waste sites.

Mr. Waldegrave: The direct cost of carrying out exploratory work will be met by NIREX. My Department will be commissioning independent analysis of the results of the explorations. This is likely to cost approximately £1 million over the next year. It is too soon to estimate the cost of assessments beyond that.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to provide for the creation of local liaison committee including county council representatives at some stage during the selection of nuclear waste disposal sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have no proposals for such legislation. As we have said in our first stage response to the Environment Committee's report on radioactive waste, the Government would encourage NIREX, local authorities and other representative groups concerned to discuss the form and role of such a committee once a particular site has been chosen for development.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to which local or water authorities monitor the effects of low-level radioactive waste in their areas.

Mrs. Rumbold: In England, monitoring of the environmental effects of authorised disposals of low level radioactive waste is undertaken by the Department of the Environment and by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Water authorities take samples of drinking water from their own sources and these samples are sent for analysis on behalf of my Department's radiochemical inspectorate. Further environmental monitoring in the vicinity of authorised disposal sites is carried out as appropriate, either by or on behalf of the inspectorate.

Local and water authorities are, of course, free to undertake their own monitoring programmes and to retain the results.

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what volume of radioactive nuclear waste, differentiating between low level waste and intermediate level waste, arising prior to the year 2030 will arise from the decommissioning of power stations.

Mrs. Rumbold: The amount of radioactive waste produced to 2030 from the decommissioning of nuclear power plants is expected to be about 101,000 tonnes, practically all of which will be low level waste. Figures in terms of volume are not yet available. Further details are given in research report number DOE/RW/85-124.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which countries were visited by Ministers in his Department during 1984-85 and 1985-86; and what was the total cost of each visit.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The table shows the countries visited by DOE Ministers in 1984-85 and 1985-86 and the total cost of each visit.

Countries Visited	*Cost £*
1984-85	
Germany (3 visits)	1,824
Luxembourg and Germany	604
Italy (2 visits)	2,349
France (2 visits)	400
Norway	777
Belgium	331
Bahrain and Gulf States	3,069
Malta	1,087
United States of America	5,009
Malaysia, Hong Kong and United States of America	8,991
17 Visits	24,441
1985-86	
Germany (3 visits)	903 964 946
Luxembourg	1,275
Holland (2 visits)	734 1,056
France (2 visits)	536 695
Norway	1,022 343
Belgium (3 visits)	499 274
United States of America	10,708
Finland	1,000
Switzerland	857
Spain	247
16 Visits	22,059

Notes:
1. The costs cover both Ministers' costs and those of private secretaries accompanying them.
2. They include all travel expenses and where relevant hotel subsistence and official entertainment.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total staffing in his Department as at 1 April 1985 and 1 April 1986.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Staff numbers in my Department were as follows:

	1 April 1985	*1 April 1986*
DOE(C)	6,561	6,521
PSA	26,230	25,401
Total	32,791	31,922

Departmental Officials' (Travel and Subsistence)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent on travel and subsistence by officials in his Department in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information is as follows:

	£
1984-85	9,075,496
1985-86	10,788,918

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent by his Department on telephone calls in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The cost to my Department of telephone calls on the BT networks, excluding rental and telex charges, was:

	1984-85 £	**1985-86* £
DOE(C)	917,000	1,017,000
PSA	* 2,542,000	2,225,000
Total	3,459,000	3,242,000

* Provisional.

Departmental Postage

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost of postage in his Department in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The total cost of postage to my Department was:

	1984-85 £	**1985-86* £
DOE(C)	558,000	447,000
PSA	887,000	979,000
Total	1,445,000	1,426,000

* Provisional.

The reduction for DOE(C) reflects a change in the rules used to apportion the joint Department of Environment/ Department of Transport postal bill between the two Departments.

London Boroughs (Sheltered Dwellings)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sheltered dwellings are maintained by each of the London boroughs; and what percentage that represents of total local authority stock.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

London (Expenditure and Debt)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of outturn capital expenditure, loan charges and net outstanding debt in the City of London and each London borough in 1983-84.

Mrs. Rumbold: The answer is as follows:

The table shows outturn gross capital expenditure, loan charges and outstanding loan debt in the City of London and each London borough in 1983-84.

The figures are taken from outturn returns supplied by local authorities.

	Gross capital expenditure	Loan charges	Outstanding loan debt £ million
City of London	8·9	31·6	246·6
Camden	51·3	61·5	523·7
Greenwich	25·7	32·7	337·8
Hackney	42·8	39·7	363·7
Hammersmith	42·6	22·8	212·7
Islington	52·6	60·4	560·5
Kensington & Chelsea	29·7	15·1	247·8
Lambeth	59·5	60·2	*
Lewisham	39·6	38·5	315·2
Southwark	54·5	62·6	530·3
Tower Hamlets	15·8	22·3	179·2
Wandsworth	42·2	37·1	322·6
Westminster	30·2	23·8	231·9
Barking	8·2	12·5	90·8
Barnet	16·5	20·3	168·7
Bexley	14·8	10·4	105·8
Brent	41·4	39·4	329·6
Bromley	22·9	13·4	120·0
Croydon	19·8	15·1	142·4
Ealing	30·2	24·4	263·2
Enfield	15·1	21·7	192·8
Haringey	59·1	40·3	391·5
Harrow	13·8	11·4	107·5
Havering	10·8	11·8	114·8
Hillingdon	27·5	24·7	221·4
Hounslow	23·9	23·6	221·9
Kingston Upon Thames	11·4	7·8	68·1
Merton	21·9	13·7	*
Newham	47·0	38·5	376·8
Redbridge	13·4	9·7	115·5
Richmond Upon Thames	9·4	7·9	76·7
Sutton	9·4	7·0	86·1
Waltham Forest	18·2	22·9	175·0

* Not available

London Residuary Body (Redundancy and Compensation Claims)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the claims for redundancy payments or compensation arising from abolition of the Greater London council have been validated by the London Residuary Body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: As of 2 May, I understand that the London Residuary Body had made some 1,700 compensation payments.

Departmental Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost of ministerial hospitality in his Department in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The total cost of Environment Ministers' hospitality during 1984-85 was £12,200 and in 1985-86 £14,740.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of official hospitality by Ministers of his Department in London restaurants in 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The total cost of Environment Ministers' hospitality in London restaurants during 1985-86 was £3,730.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent on official hospitality by civil servants in his Department in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Expenditure on official hospitality by civil servants in my Department was:

	1984-85	£ *1985-86
DOE(c)	16,400	16,000
PSA	11,300	10,200
Total	27,700	26,200

Ministerial Offices (Furnishing Cost)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of furnishing Minister's offices in his Department in 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The cost was £12,482.

Departmental Officials (Overseas Travel)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent on overseas travel by officials in his Department in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information is not readily available for the years 1979-80 to 1983-84, but I will send it to the hon. Member.

The figures for overseas travel and subsistence in 1984-85 and in 1985-86 are as follows:

	£
1984-85	559,490
1985-86	551,211

Voluntary Organisations (Funding)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is keeping any information on voluntary organisations which have lost their funding following abolition of the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Parking Fines (Departmental Funds)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many fixed penalty parking fines were paid out of Departmental funds in 1985.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I shall answer this question shortly.

Consultants

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many consultants were retained by his Department in 1985-86; and what was the cost.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: One hundred and thirty-six consultancy contracts were let by DOE(C) in 1985-86 at a total estimated cost of £2,227,000. The equivalent sum for PSA was £153,400,000 covering all works consultancy commissions and management consultancies, but the number of consultancies let is not readily available.

Departmental Newspaper Purchases

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many copies of *The Sun*, *The Mirror*, *Financial Times*, *Morning Star* and *The Times* are purchased daily by his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Department of the Environment buys 13 copies of *The Sun*, 12 *The Mirror*, 49 *Financial Times*, Seven *Morning Star* and 35 *The Times*.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the consultants used and consultancy fees paid by the London Docklands Development Corporation in the financial year 1985-86.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current acreage of the London Docklands Development Corporation owned land by borough location.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Local Government (Consents)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications for consent under section 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government Interim Provisions Act 1984 were still outstanding on 31 March; and if he will provide a breakdown by section, description and date submitted to his Department.

Mr. Tracey: One hundred and sixty-nine applications were outstanding on 31 March 1986, of which 134 were awaiting further information from the authorities concerned. A breakdown is given in the list. A more detailed description of the applications in question could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Description	*Date application received*
Section 7—Greater London Council	
Brent Federation of Tenants and Residents Association	7 June 1985
London Advice and Counselling for Youth (LACSY)	24 September 1985
Haringey Women's Training and Education Centre	25 November 1985
Central London Youth Project	12 February 1986
Jagonari	12 February 1986
Mukti	17 February 1986
London New Technology Network	12 February 1986
Section 7—Greater Manchester Council	
New Barrack Tenants Management Group	29 January 1986
Church Action on Poverty	29 January 1986
Parallax Pictures Limited	6 September 1985
North West Council for Sport/Recreation	27 November 1985
Nuclear Free Zone Movement	3 February 1986
Section 7—Merseyside County Council	
Black Lynx	21 January 1986
Merseyside Media Project	16 February 1986
Liverpool Children's Holiday	12 February 1986
Section 7—Tyne and Wear County Council	
Microbial Technology	25 March 1986
Section 7—West Midlands County Council	
Muhammed Ali Community Service	5 February 1986
Asian Resource Centre, Coventry	16 July 1985
Anti-Racism Year	17 October 1985
Sandwell Women's Refuge	7 January 1986
O.S.C.A.R.	11 February 1986
Castle Vale Teenage Coffee Bar	11 February 1986
West Midlands Co-Op Finance	7 January 1986
Smethwick Canal Heritage Area	29 January 1986
Old Ascot Community Association	11 February 1986
Section 7—West Yorkshire County Council	
Mini-Enterprise Boards	29 January 1986
Section 8—Greater London Council	
Goswell Road/St John Street	9 August 1984
403-405 Hackney Road, E2	5 December 1984
GLC Staff Sports Ground Sutton	17 April 1985
GLC Sports Ground Sutton	17 April 1985
Mile End Park	2 October 1985
63 Hampstead High Street NW3	18 December 1985
71 Endell Street WC2	18 December 1985
Heal's Building	23 December 1985
Porters Park Golf Club, Radlett	20 January 1986
R/O 10 Fortress Road, NW5	28 January 1986
Kingsway Hall, 70 Great Queen Street	30 January 1986
Parliament Hill: Clubhouse	30 January 1986
Parliament Hill, Hampstead Heath	13 February 1986
36-60 South Lambeth Road, SW18	27 February 1986
17A New North Road, N1	10 March 1986
London Ecology Centre Premises	12 March 1986
27 Shaftesbury Avenue	21 March 1986
184 Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2	25 March 1986
10/10a Theed Street, SE1	26 March 1986
25 Romulas Court, Brentford	26 March 1986
69 Romulas Court, Brentford	26 March 1986
[illegible]omulas Court, Brentford	26 March 1986
68 Romulas Court, Brentford	26 March 1986
7 Romulas Court, Brentford	26 March 1986
Section 8—Greater Manchester Council	
Coral Street, Ardwick	5 June 1985
Gypsy Caravan Site, Tameside	22 July 1985
Unit B Orlando Street, Bolton	26 July 1985
Midland Railway Didsbury Line	11 September 1985
2 Clough Street, Rochdale	12 November 1985
Offices, George Lane, Bredbury	25 November 1985
4 Chapel Street, Salford	16 December 1985
Marshall House, Salford	22 January 1986
Slack House, 297/299 Chapel Street	10 February 1986
29 Hopkins Street, Manchester	24 February 1986
3 Hopkins Street, Manchester	24 February 1986
St Annes Road/Guide Lane, Auden	11 March 1986
East Lancashire Railway	6 March 1986
Section 8—Merseyside County Council	Gardners Row Centre
10 February 1986	
T&GW Union HQ Liverpool	4 March 1986
Section 8—South Yorkshire County Council	
Land Fronting Gawber Rd, Barnsley	14 March 1985
Malty Brickworks Quarry	2 April 1985
Barkwood Rd, Rossington	2 April 1985
Common Lane and Bromley Lane	10 May 1985
Part site of 106-116 Ecclesall	12 July 1985
Racecommon Road-York Garage	18 October 1985
54 Cemetery Road, Barnsley	15 January 1986
7 Yardborough Terrace, Bentley	30 January 1986
Newsagents Kiosk Castle St.	3 February 1986
96 Cemetery Road, Barnsley	7 February 1986
169 Penistone Road, Sheffield	14 February 1986
171 Penistone Road, Sheffield	19 February 1986
128 Cemetery Road, Barnsley	6 March 1986
5 Foulstone Row, Wombwell	14 March 1986

Description	Date application received
15 Dudworth Road, Barnsley	17 March 1986
86 Holme Lane, Sheffield	20 March 1986
Section 8—Tyne and Wear County Council	
East House Farm, Killingworth	7 February 1986
West View Terrace, Dunston	4 March 1986
70-78 Blenheim Street, Newcastle	18 March 1986
Section 8—West Midlands County Council	
Former Stratford Road Gasworks	12 December 1985
Former Stratford Road Gasworks	12 December 1985
Springvale Training Ltd	16 December 1985
Birchcroft Farm Technology Development	13 January 1986
11-13 Littleton Street East	3 February 1986
Land Adjacent Waverley Trading Estate	27 February 1986
Kwik Save Store, Blackheath	12 March 1986
Kwik Save Store, Blackheath	12 March 1986
23 Warwick Road, Birmingham	17 March 1986
17 Warwick Road, Birmingham	17 March 1986
19 Lockwood Road, Birmingham	18 March 1986
1 Market Street, Great Bridge	19 March 1986
Section 8—West Yorkshire County Council	
Manface Quarry South Kirkby	21 Jan 1986
0·51 Acres at Churwell Lane	6 February 1986
1·65 Acres at Churwell Lane	6 February 1986
Don Pedro, Normanton	18 February 1986
95 Westgate Hill Street, Bradford	27 February 1986
Staithgate Lane, Bradford	5 March 1986
Section 9—Greater London Council	
Trinity College	15 July 1985
Burgess Park	15 July 1985
Burgess Park	15 July 1985
Burgess Park	15 July 1985
Burgess Park	15 July 1985
Battersea Park	15 July 1985
Finsbury Park	15 July 1985
Mile End	15 July 1985
Mile End Park	15 July 1985
Mile End Park	15 July 1985
Mile End Park	15 July 1985
Mile End Park	15 July 1985
Parliament Hill	15 July 1985
Yarnton Way, Thamesmead	18 July 1985
LFB Trianing Centre	1 August 1985
LFB Training Centre	1 August 1985
Jubilee Gardens, Lambeth	12 December 1985
Sidworth Street, Hackney	23 December 1985
Herringham Road/Hardens Manor	24 January 1986
Flexmere Estates/Tower Gardens/Lord Lane	24 January 1986
Ferrier Estate, Greenwich	30 January 1986
97 Prestons Road, E14	18 February 1986
Carlisle House, WC1	27 February 1986
South Bank Memorial Statue	14 March 1986
Civil Defence Video Films	27 March 1985
Dial-A-Ride	1 August 1985
Agricultural Restoration	6 June 1985
Anti-Racist Awareness	14 June 1985
Victoria Park and Burdett Gardens	30 September 1985
GLC Arts and Recreation Department	23 October 1985
South Bank Car Parks	26 March 1986
Londoners' Action Kit	17 July 1985
Section 9—Greater Manchester Council	
Hulme Lock, Bridgewater Canal	24 June 1985
Gatley Hill House, Gatley	9 August 1985
Hindley Fire Station	26 September 1985
Hollingworth Lake, Rochdale	28 January 1986
Round House, Every Street, Manchester	28 January 1986
4 Refuse Tips	27 February 1986
Fibre Pulping Process—Trials	5 December 1985
Consumer Advice Centre/Trafford	7 May 1985

Description	Date application received
Section 9—Merseyside County Council	
Huyton Lane Road/Woolfall Heath	13 February 1986
Childwell Valley/Hedgefield Road	13 February 1986
Houghton Road Pelican Crossing	13 February 1986
Market Street/Sankey Street/Earle Street	4 February 1986
Section 9—South Yorkshire County Council	
Highways Capital Programme	29 April 1985
Penistone Road (Stage 1) Improvement	15 May 1985
Rushymoor Street, Askern	17 May 1985
Penistone Road Stage 1	17 May 1985
Visitors Design Centre, Howell Wood	17 July 1985
Highstone Lane, Barnsley	19 July 1985
Whitehall Road/Whitehall Lane	19 July 1985
Kiveton Lane/Station Road	19 July 1985
B6388 Richards Road, Sheffield	19 July 1985
Dog Kennels Land, Kiveton Park	19 July 1985
A629 Barnsley Road, Brierley	9 July 1985
Section 9—Tyne and Wear County Council	
Hadrian Park Landscaping Phase 2	17 June 1985
Ryton/Greenside Phases 3 and 4	12 July 1985
Hebburn Riverside Landscaping	23 July 1985
Armstrong Bridge, Newcastle	3 December 1985
Section 9—West Midlands County Council	
Hotel Development B	14 October 1985
Dudley Road/Perkfield Road Junction	16 December 1985
Operation Green Up Schemes	23 December 1985
Park Lime Pits Country Park	19 December 1985
Old Pleck Road Improvement	8 January 1986
Holmes—Major Incident System	6 February 1986
Design—Waste Disposal Site	5 November 1985

Radiation

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the dosage limits for radiation beyond which it is considered harmful for human beings to suffer exposure.

Mrs. Rumbold: On the grounds of prudence it is generally assumed there is no threshold level for the effects of exposure to radiation. However, international recommendations permit exposures up to 1 milli-Sievert per year on average throughout life with a possibility of 5 milli-Sievert per year for a short period. The risk to any individual from exposures at these levels is considered to be negligible.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is considered to be the normal level of background radiation in the atmosphere so far as the United Kingdom is concerned.

Mrs. Rumbold: Normal background radiation in the United Kingdom varies between 0·1 and 0·3 micro-Sieverts per hour depending on the geological formations in the area. About one third of this radiation dose is associated with radioactivity in air; primarily radon thoron and their decay products from natural radioactivity in the earth.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the highest level of background radiation recorded in the United Kingdom since the Chernobyl accident.

Mrs. Rumbold: The highest level of radiation reported by the NRPB was 1 micro-Sievert per hour for a brief period at two places in Cumbria and one in north Wales on Saturday 3 May 1986.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the amount of total potential fallout from Chernobyl.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not possible to estimate the total potential fallout until the Russian authorities release further technical details.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will compare the normal levels of background radiation with those levels of radiation recorded on Friday 2 May, Saturday 3 May, Sunday 4 May, Monday 5 May and Tuesday 6 May at Dounreay, Darlington, Didcot and Dulwich; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will provide the specific daily readings taken at each monitoring location identified by name throughout the United Kingdom for separate levels of iodine 131, tellurium 132, iodine 132, ruthenium 103 and caesium 137, from 25 April to the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish the level of radioactive traces in rainwater for each area of the United Kingdom for each day from Friday 2 May to Wednesday 7 May.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ask the National Radiological Protection Board to publish all the detailed readings of radiation levels available to it over the past two weeks.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to monitor regularly radioactivity levels in the north of England and Scotland in the light of the Chernobyl incident; what steps he has taken to inform and protect the public in the present situation; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to the replies*, 8 May 1986]: I refer the hon. Members to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in the House on 6 May 1986 at column 21. Samples have been taken daily, and since last Friday 2 May daily bulletins have been issued by the NRPB after consultation with Government Departments. Extensive monitoring will continue and its results will be made available to the public and the House. Because the information requested is so bulky it is being made available through the press offices in my Department, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

London Skyline

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment with whom responsibility now lies for decisions regarding photogrametric records of London's skylines and sensitivity to high buildings maps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The records are in the care of the London Residuary Body until arrangements can be made for their transfer to the London Planning Advisory Committee.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has anything to add to the answer of 30 November 1984, *Official Report*, columns *611-12* concerning the net reduction of 8,000 posts in local government as a whole following abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has nothing to add to that statement at this stage.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 1 May, *Official Report*, column *485*, if he will state the total projected amount likely to be made available by the London Residuary Body for redundancy payments following abolition of the Greater London Council.

Mr. Tracey: The London Residuary Body's budget for 1986-87 provides for £35 million to cover all compensation payments. It is still too early to estimate the amount for redundancy payments.

London Marathon Board

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 1 May, *Official Report*, column *487*, what has been the total estimated cost of support given by Her Majesty's Government in each year to the London Marathon Board.

Mr. Tracey: The Department of the Environment has charged no facility fee for the use of the Royal Parks for part of the London marathon, although it requires the London Marathon Board to reimburse the net costs of additional works and facilities provided in the parks specifically for the marathon.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 2 May, *Official Report*, column *506*, if he will give details of the matters relevant to the London Residuary Body's functions under the Local Government Act 1985 which were discussed at the meeting on 23 April between his officials and the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tracey: The matters discussed are amongst those set out in my answers to the hon. Member of 21 April at columns *66-67*.

Soviet Nuclear Accident

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what scientific evidence is available to him to account for the absence of traces of plutonium in the fallout from the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in the Soviet Union.

Mrs. Rumbold: No direct scientific evidence is available to account for the absence of plutonium in the fallout observed in western Europe. However, significant emission of plutonium would be expected only if very high temperatures were reached during such an accident and it may be that high enough temperatures have not been attained.

Protected Planning Zones

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will seek to amend the Housing

and Planning Bill to establish protected planning zones in which central Government have ultimate planning control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: We are satisfied with the basic structure of responsibility for planning control under the planning Acts and do not consider that in most cases development control needs to be in the hands of my right hon. Friend rather than of the local planning authority. In so far as they are material to the particular case, the local planning authority must have regard in reaching its decisions to the planning policies of my right hon. Friend as expressed in circulars and other published statements, and to the provisions of the structure plan approved by him.

Nuclear Dumps

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he has had consultations with the Food Manufacturers' Association about the siting of nuclear dumps;

(2) whether he has received representations from or held consultations with any section of the fishing industry about the siting of nuclear waste dumps.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have had no such consultations. If the Food Manufacturers' Association or the fishing industry has views to offer, I shall be pleased to give them careful consideration.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has taken on extra staff to deal with correspondence arising from the NIREX nuclear dump proposals.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to the answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *321*, what effect his decision to limit the disposal of nuclear waste at NIREX sites to low level waste will have on the future disposal of reprocessing wastes at NIREX sites;

(2) pursuant to the answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *321*, whether the reprocessing wastes referred to include materials contaminated in the course of reprocessing but which do not originate as waste for reprocessing;

(3) how many letters and petition signatures for and against the siting of a nuclear waste dump he has received in the month of April from each of the four areas short-listed by NIREX;

(4) if he will reply to the letter to him from Councillor S. J. Norton of 38 Melrose Way, Grimsby, South Humberside, about the South Killingholme potential nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for the councillor to have a reasonable opportunity to reply before the special development order is laid; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will make it his policy to reply to the letter to him from Councillor A. M. Webster of 66 Caistor Drive, Grimsby, South Humberside, about the South Killingholme proposed nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for the councillor to have a reasonable opportunity to reply before the special develpment order is laid; and if he will make a statement;

(6) if he will make it his policy to reply to Councillor J. F. Orchard of 8 Worsley Close, Immingham, South Humberside, about the South Killingholme potential nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for the recipient to have a reasonable opportunity to reply before the special development order is laid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Radiation Levels

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what the levels of background radiation for each county have been on a daily basis; and what are normal background radiation levels, from the period when the fallout from Chernobyl first reached England and Wales to the latest available date.

Mrs. Rumbold: Normal background radiation in the United Kingdom varies between 0·1 and 0·3 micro-Sieverts per hour. Radionuclides such as the isotopes of iodine and caesium would not normally be present. Since Friday 2 May samples have been taken regularly at monitoring stations throughout the United Kingdom and daily bulletins have been issued by the NRPB after consultation with Government Departments. Because this information is so bulky it is being made available through the press offices in my Department, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 12 May 1986

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Land Registry

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Attorney-General whether he intends to bring forward measures to open the land registry to public scrutiny.

The Attorney-General: The hon. Member is presumably referring to the Law Commission's proposals in the report No. 148 on land registration, "Inspection of the Register". I refer the Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 6 May last at column 1.

Merthyr Tydfil County Court

Mr. Rowlands asked the Attorney-General what is the average time that a litigant has to wait from making an application for *(a)* maintenance and *(b)* access to his or her child to be heard before the registrar at the Merthyr Tydfil county court.

The Attorney-General: The average waiting time for appointments before the registrar at Merthyr Tydfil county court is 10-11 weeks for maintenance hearings and 13-14 weeks for access hearings. If the hon. Member is concerned about delay in any particular case I would ask him to draw it to the attention of the Lord Chancellor so that inquiries may be made.

PRIME MINISTER

European Council

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister whether she is satisfied with the preparations which have been made for the next meeting of the European Council; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As I explained in my answer on 4 March the next European Council will be held on 26-27 June, and it is for the Dutch Presidency to make the necessary arrangements.

Soviet Union (Nuclear Accident)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister when she was first informed officially that British scientists were in contact with their Russian counterparts about the Chernobyl disaster.

The Prime Minister: I am not responsible for such contacts.

Top Salary Posts

Ms. Richardson asked the Prime Minister if she will *(a)* list the posts which fall within her scope of the top salary review, *(b)* list such posts currently held by women and *(c)* publish the number of such posts held by women and their proportion of the total for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

The Prime Minister: The remit of the Top Salaries Review Body covers senior civil servants, senior members of the Armed Forces and the Judiciary. The numbers of men and women occupying posts covered by the TSRB over the past 5 years is as follows:

	**Home Civil Service*			*†Armed Forces*			*‡Judiciary*		
	Male	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
1 January 1982	704	32	736	226	0	226	668	19	687
1 January 1983	663	31	694	221	0	221	743	21	764
1 January 1984	653	28	681	210	0	210	685	25	710
1 January 1985	644	25	669	201	0	201	726	26	752
1 January 1986	634	26	660	208	0	208	801	31	‖832

* Includes Grades 1,2 and 3 (formerly Permanent Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Under Secretary).
† The TSRB covers Major General and equivalent and above.
‡ Refers to England and Wales only.
‖ Includes 9 Social Security Commissioners and 50 Special Commissioners of Income Tax.

United States Visitors (Safety)

Mr. Favell asked the Prime Minister what discussions she had with President Reagan during the recent economic summit in Tokyo about efforts by the United States Administration to encourage Americans to visit Britain and to ensure that accurate information is available to potential United States visitors to Britain about their safety.

The Prime Minister: We are doing all we can to persuade American tourists that it is safe to visit the United Kingdom. We have drawn the attention of President Reagan and of senior officials in his Administration to the importance of this: they have made a number of helpful statements.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Prime Minister what criteria she proposes to use in deciding whether to invoke the provisions of article 11 of the Anglo-Irish agreement relating to a review or revocation of the agreement.

The Prime Minister: The Anglo-Irish agreement provides under article 11 that the working of the intergovernmental conference shall be reviewed after three years and that it may be reviewed earlier if either the United Kingdom or Irish Government wish. I have made it clear that if there were agreement upon proposals for devolved government we should need to review the implications of any such proposals for the working of the intergovernmental conference. I cannot foresee other

circumstances in which we might need to review the working of the conference befoe the end of the three-year period.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Prime Minister over what time scale Her Majesty's Government propose to judge the extent to which the Anglo-Irish agreement has fulfilled the objectives set for it.

The Prime Minister: We cannot expect the Anglo-Irish agreement to achieve its objectives overnight, and it would be wrong to prescribe time scales. I am, nevertheless, encouraged by the purposeful start that has been made on the range of matters, not least in co-operation on security.

Legislation

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Prime Minister if she will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government that in future all legislation relating to Great Britain which is currently extended to Northern Ireland by subsequent Orders in Council applies directly to Northern Ireland; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) on 13 March at column 544.

Prevention of Terrorism Act

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Prime Minister how the administration of the Prevention of Terrorism Act will be affected by the undertaking given at the Tokyo conference by France, West Germany, Japan, Canada, Italy and the United States of America not to admit to their respective territories persons excluded from the United Kingdom under that Act.

The Prime Minister: The administration of the Act will not be affected.

WALES

Opencast Mining

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by site and county all opencast coalmining applications received since 1 January 1984, stating, in each case, whether authorisation has been granted, refused or is still pending; and if he will list separately for each approved, refused or as yet unauthorised case, the tonnage per year to be mined or proposed to be mined and the time-period requested or authorised.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Since 1 January 1984, four applications for authorisation have been made to me. No decision has yet been taken in any case. The information requested is given in the following table:

Opencast Coalmining—Applications Made to Secretary of State for Wales

County	*Site*	*Time (Years)*	*Annual Years (tonnes)*
Clwyd	Ley Farm, Chirk	2½	45,200
	Ashfield House Farm, Ewloe	1½	33,333
Dyfed	Garnant	5	80,000
Powys/West Glamorgan	Nant Helen, Ystradgynlais	11	254,545

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total number of smears for cervical cancer examined in Wales for each year since 1970.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is provided in relevant volumes of "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for Wales", copies of which are in the Library. The latest available figures relate to 1984, and are contained in issue No. 12 of the publication.

Sheep Annual Premium Payments

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Wales which breeds of ewe in Wales and which areas of Wales are currently eligible for sheep annual premium payments.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: All breeds of ewe in all areas of Wales are currently eligible for sheep annual premium payments, subject to all other conditions of the scheme being satisfied.

Education Support Grants

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the amount of expenditure and the activities to be supported through education support grants in the financial year 1987-88.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Subject to Parliament's approval of regulations which will amend the Education Support Grant Regulations 1984, excluding midday supervision in schools, it is intended that expenditure of some £3·3 million will be supported by education support grant in 1987-88. We propose to devote £1·8 million of this total to support continuing expenditure from projects first approved in earlier years. About £1·5 million will be available to support expenditure on new activities and on new starts on existing activities. Grant will be paid at the rate of 70 per cent. of the amount of expenditure approved for support.

The following tables show the activities on which expenditure is committed in 1987-88 and the new and extended activities which we propose should rank for education support grant in Wales in 1987-88; the amount of expenditure for each; a provisional assessment of the number of LEAs likely to be supported and the length of support. The precise division of the £1·5 million available for new and extended activities and the distribution among authorities will not be settled until applications have been received and considered.

Education Support Grants Financial Year 1987-88

Category	*New expenditure envisaged to be supported* £ *million*	*Provisional Assessment of number of LEAS to be supported*	*Likely length of support*
1. The provision of retraining and updating courses directed towards the needs of industry and commerce	0·09	2	2 years
2. The development of the use of information technology at further education establishments by providing equipment, preparing or providing course material and computer software and training teachers at such establishments	0·52	all	1 year
3. The planning development and co-ordination of provision to meet the educational needs including the need for guidance, of those who are unemployed (excluding those currently receiving full-time education).	0·03	2 or 3	2 years
4. The provision of data processing equipment, accessories and software for use in the management of further education establishments.	0·07	all or most	1 year
5. The provision of computerised learning aids at further education establishments for use by students with special educational needs.	0·08	all	1 year
6. The strengthening of college-employer links to improve the quality and relevance of NAFE provision.	0·04	2 or 3	1 year
7. Meeting the educational needs of persons from ethnic minorities, promoting harmony between different racial groups or in other ways preparing persons/or life in a multiethnic society.	0·03	1	2-3 years
8. The provision to schools of books and equipment for use on courses leading to an examination for the General Certificate of Secondary Education.	0·59	all	2 years
9. Promoting social responsibility in children.	0·05	1 or 2	a maximum of 5 years.

Committed expenditure on activities begun in earlier years

Category	*Committed Expenditure to be supported through ESG in 1987-88* £ *million*	*Number of LEAS to be supported*	*Total length of support*
The teaching of mathematics in schools	0·41	8	4 years
The teaching of science and technology as part of primary education	0·30	7	4 years
Pilot projects to develop records of achievement for young people in secondary schools and colleges	0·17	WJEC	5 years
Pilot projects to improve the quality of education provided in primary schools in urban areas	0·10	3	5 years
Pilot projects to improve the quality or the range of the curriculum provided in primary schools in rural areas	0·17	4	5 years
Pilot projects to meet the educational needs of those from ethnic minorities	0·03	1	up to 5 years
Action within the education service to combat the misuse of drugs	0·16	8	2 years
Developing the knowledge and appreciation among pupils in schools in Wales, of the heritage and culture of Wales.	0·29	8	5 years
The provision of retraining and updating courses directed towards the needs of industry and commerce (PICKUP)	0·07	6	up to 3 years
The planning, development and co-ordination of provision to meet the educational needs, including the need for guidance of those who are unemployed (excluding those currently receiving full-time education)	0·12	6	2 years

SCOTLAND

Drift Net Salmon Fishery

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his present estimate of the total number of people in the east of Scotland whose employment has been affected by the expansion of the north-east drift net salmon fishery, including those whose jobs are dependent on angling and tourism; and if he can express this total in terms of man days per year.

Mr. John MacKay: I regret that information on employment in salmon fishing and related industries is not collected in a way in which it would be possible to make the kind of estimate the hon. Member has asked for.

Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many whole-time equivalent community psychiatric nurses have been employed by each health board in each year from 1974 to the latest available year, broken down by *(a)* RMN, *(b)* RMNS, *(c)* SEN-M, *(d)* SEN-MH, *(e)* others and *(f)* total in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is not held centrally. Numbers of qualified nurses employed as community psychiatric nurses in Scotland for the years 1981 to 1985 were given in my answer of 23 April to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) at column 173.

TRANSPORT

Drink-Driving Campaign

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his answers to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *310*, if he plans any further publicity campaigns beyond those set out in order to publicise drink-driving enforcement in May and June.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Drinking and driving is a year-round problem. Information and promotional material is always available to the public. Our rolling paid publicity programme focuses on this problem during those parts of the year when it is most important to remind drivers of the risks they face if they mix drinking and driving. I will consider further initiatives. Knowledge, self-discipline and enforcement all matter.

Vehicle Registration Prefix

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received against the movement from 1 August to 1 October of the motor vehicle date licence prefix; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have received 605 letters, mainly from motor dealers, opposing the move to October in 1987.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with the working of the regulations for disabled parking badges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are currently reviewing the operation of the orange badge scheme with local authorities. This will form the basis for a discussion document for wider circulation in the summer.

London (Transport System)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of miles and percentage of route mileage, respectively, of bus services within the aegis of London Regional Transport run by *(a)* London Buses Ltd and *(b)* other organisations.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is not clear to what period the hon. Member's question relates. The information requested would, however, be a matter for LRT.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated percentage change in the first quarter of 1986 from the previously lowest figures for the first quarter of a year in *(a)* passenger miles travelled and *(b)* passenger journeys taken, in the London Underground system.

Mr. David Mitchel: Data for the first quarter of 1986 are not available yet. I will write to the hon. Member when they are.

School Buses

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has to assist local authorities and passenger transport executives to continue operating the schools special journey buses, especially those not being registered with the traffic commissioners by the Yorkshire Traction Company; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consideration he has given to awarding special grants to those local authorities whose school buses are likely to be withdrawn from service as a result of bus companies not registering them with the traffic commissioners because they do not operate on a profitable basis; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what system he intends to operate to safeguard young schoolchildren's safety on the roads walking to school as a result of school bus services being withdrawn, as under the terms of the Transport Act they cannot be registered because they are unprofitable services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Local authorities and passenger transport executives can subsidise local bus services, including school services, to supplement those which have been registered as commercially viable. Their expenditure on public transport revenue support is taken into account in the calculation of the rate support grant. Competitive tendering for subsidy contracts will ensure value for money spent on bus service subsidies.

Radioactivity

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if any assessment has been made of the danger of radiation building up on the fuselage of commercial planes; and whether he has given any advice to airlines about safety precautions in the light of increased atmospheric radiation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority has advised operators of British aircraft to monitor their

aircraft for increases in radioactivity levels so that precautions may be taken if necessary. Monitoring of British aircraft operating over Europe has indicated only slight localised increases in levels of radioactivity.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's policy on the granting of extensions to the licences of any of the Woolwich ferry vessels which are not being regularly maintained.

Mr. Ridley: The three vessels operating the ferry service at Woolwich are surveyed at 12-monthly intervals by marine surveyors in my Department: if satisfactory, they are issued with passenger certificates, valid for 12 months. When there are good reasons why the ferries cannot be taken out of service for this survey these certificates may be extended for a short period, but only if it is found safe to do so following an inspection by one of my Department's surveyors.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to maintenance work currently being carried out on each of the three vessels operating the Woolwich ferry to ensure that his Department's safety standards are being met.

Mr. Ridley: One of the ferry boats, the John Burns, is still undergoing a major refit which should have been completed by the GLC in October 1985. The Ernest Bevin and the James Newman receive a visual inspection twice a day by the marine superintendent of the London borough of Greenwich. Following an inspection by the Department's marine surveyor, both received three-month extensions of their passenger licences on 8 May.

British Caledonian

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the financial loss in terms of *(a)* revenue and *(b)* profit accruing to British Caledonian following his decision to revoke the licence to operate the helicopter airlink between Gatwick and Heathrow.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority estimated that the loss to British Caledonian in terms of both revenue and profit would be about £2 million to £3 million annually, but this has to be balanced against the environmental disturbance caused by the helicopter service. Moreover, in my right hon. Friend's view, the completion of the new motorway link between the two airports means that alternative fast surface links can be provided which should prove acceptable to the majority of passengers wishing to transfer between the airports.

Melbourn Bypass

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the reason for the delay in reaching a decision on the siting of the Melbourn bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Some 600 objections were received to the draft orders. They raised a number of complex issues, including the possibility of an alternative to the route proposed. It has necessarily taken some time to consider the objections and the inspector's recommendations. The Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport hope their joint decision will not be long delayed.

A1-M1 Link Road

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport what time has elapsed since the conclusion of the public inquiry into the A1-M1 link road; when he expects to receive the inspector's report; when he intends to make a decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Public inquiries into the proposed 45-mile M1-A1 link road ended last June after nine months. I understand that the inspector does not expect to complete his report before June or July of this year. Given the scope and complexity of the issues, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport do not expect to announce their joint decision before the end of the year at the earliest.

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received on the subject of the A1-M1 link road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At the public inquiries, the inspector had before him about 1,200 objections and representations, including some in support of the proposals. A few representations have been received since the inquiries.

Transport Undertakings (Audit Control)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what audit control is proposed to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of new transport undertakings established under the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: The audit of public transport companies formed under section 59 and 67 of the Act will be carried out in accordance with the Companies Act 1985 by auditors approved by the Audit Commission for England and Wales or the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland.

Helicopter Coverage (North-West Scotland)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in assessing helicopter coverage off north-west Scotland, the United Kingdom SAR committee's working group will take into account the response times to the incidents off Benbecula in October 1981 and off Lewis in December 1983.

Mr. Ridley: The United Kingdom SAR committee's helicopter working group is intended to consider the casualty risks arising from shipping, fishing vessels and aircraft, including light aircraft, such as those lost in Hebridean waters on 3 October 1981 and 8 December 1983. In making its recommendations, the working group will take into account all relevant factors, including changes in pattern of activity, weather, survival times and performance of SAR helicopters.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Act 1980

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many changes to areas of prime responsibility have been submitted to him under the terms of section 12(1)*(d)* of the Education Act 1980.

Mr. Dunn: I understand that the right hon. Member is referring to changes of catchment area for which proposals under section 12(1)*(d)* are not required.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the most recent figures for the pupil to teacher ratio in schools in the United Kingdom; and what information he has about the equivalent figures for France, Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 11 March to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) at column 397.

Higher Education

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the most recent figures for the number of young people in higher education as a proportion of the 18 to 25-year-old population in the United Kingdom; and what information he has about the equivalent figures for France, Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Walden: Information for other countries is not available in the form requested. The table shows new entrants to higher education expressed as a percentage of a single year age cohort (the average population in the most relevant age range). This measure was devised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as the fairest measure for international comparisons of higher education participation.

New entrants to higher education as a percentage of the relevant population 1982-83

	*Age group**	*New Entrants per Relevant Population†*
United Kingdom	18-20	‡30·1
France	18-20	34·1
Japan	18	‖34·2
United States of America	18	‖61·2

* Age group which encompasses at least 80 per cent. of new entrants (divided by number of single years involved) and which is used as the denominator for column 2.
† New entrants (ie. those entering higher education for the first time) of all ages, as a percentage of a single young age cohort (the average population in the specified age range). Includes full-time and part-time.
‡ 1983-84. Overseas students and those already with a higher education qualification excluded. Excludes correspondence courses and others outside the public education system other than nursing and paramedical students at DHSS establishments. If included the United Kingdom figure would be around 40 per cent.
‖ Includes private sector colleges.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in tabular form the proportion of those in employment with higher education qualifications or the equivalent in the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada and the United States of America, respectively, and show these proportions for each year from 1970 to the latest available date.

Mr. Walden: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many student places in higher education have been unfilled in each year since 1979 in the universities and the public sector institutions, respectively; and what number of those places, and what proportion of the total, have been in science, technology and engineering.

Mr. Walden: Information on student places is not collected centrally.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish information available to his Department setting out the correlation between the number of young people in the 18 to 19-year-old cohort and the number entering higher education in each of the years from 1970 to the latest available date.

Mr. Walden: The relationship is measured by the age participation index, which is defined as the number of home initial entrants, aged less than 21, to full-time and sandwich courses of higher education expressed as a percentage of the most relevant age cohort. This is taken as half of those who were aged 18 and 19 in the relevant year. The figures for Great Britain are as follows:

	API	*API†*
1972	14·3	12·4
1973	14·0	12·3
1974	13·8	12·2
1975	13·7	12·4
1976	13·3	12·5
1977	12·8	12·4
1978	12·4	12·1
1979	12·4	12·3
1980	12·6	*
1981	13·1	*
1982	13·4	*
1983	13·2	*
1984	13·7	*
‡1985	14·0	*

* There were no such entrants after 1979.
† Excluding entrants to teacher training courses with less than 2 'A' levels.
‡ Early estimate.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish information available to his Department indicating the extent to which there is a connection between levels of participation in higher education and national economic performance.

Mr. Walden: It is very difficult to quantify the effect that higher education has on economic performance. Calculations of the social rate of return approach this question indirectly by analysing the relationship between levels of education and earnings. An account of work in this area by DES economists was published in Cmnd. 9524 "The Development of Higher Education, into the 1990s". This suggested that the overall social rate of return to university first degrees was in the region of 5 to 8 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish information available to his

Department indicating the social rate of return from higher education provided at particular institutions or in particular departments of such institutions.

Mr. Walden: No information is available on the social rate of return from higher education provided at particular departments or institutions.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish any information available to his Department from sample surveys indicating the extent to which those who have experienced higher education believe that they have benefited from it.

Mr. Walden: I am aware of only three studies, which, while not of the precise kind referred to by my hon. Friend, have a bearing on students' perceptions of the value of higher education:

(a) a study undertaken in 1977 of persons graduating in 1970, which attempted to assess the extent to which student aspirations had been realised by their subsequent employment. The results were published in June 1981 as a Department of Employment Research paper (Number 26) and are available in the statistics section of the Library.

(b) a graduate employment study sponsored by CNAA and my Department and carried out under the direction of Miss B. Hollinshead of Manchester Polytechnic. The Technical Report of the project ("Early Careers of Graduates") was published this month and I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library.

(c) a 1982 survey of final year undergraduates, which formed part of a research project commissioned by my Department from Professor Kogan of Brunel University. The results are summarised in "Expectations of Higher Education: A synopsis and commentary on its main findings" (published in 1984). A copy is in the Library.

Graduate Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the most recent figures for science, engineering and technology graduates in the United Kingdom; and what information he has about the equivalent figures for France, Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

Students successfully completing higher education programmes in Engineering and Technology and Science subjects

		*Percentage of the relevant population**			
	Year	*Below first degree level*	*First degree level*	*Both levels*	*Post graduate level*	*All levels*
Engineering and Technology†						
France	1982	—	1·3	1·3	0·2	1·6
Japan‡	1982	0·4	3·8	4·3	0·5	4·7
United States of America‖	1982	—	1·7	1·7	0·3	2·0
United Kingdom¶	1982	2·1	1·6	3·7	0·3	3·9
	1983	2·3	1·6	3·8	0·3	4·1
All Science subjects•						
France	1981	2·8	5·3	8·1	4·3	12·3
Japan■	1982	1·4	7·3	8·7	0·9	9·5
United States of America‖	1981	3·2	6·3	9·5	2·4	11·9
United Kingdom¶•	1982	7·8	5·5	13·3	1·6	14·9
	1983	7·7	5·3	12·9	1·5	14·4

* A single year age cohort based on the average population in an age range related to the likely qualification ages.

† Home students only.

‡ Estimates of students successfully completing courses in architecture, town planning, trade, have been subtracted from published UNESCO figures. Includes private sector institutions and correspondence courses.

‖ Includes private sector institutions.

¶ Includes estimates of successful completions of courses leading to professional qualifications in public sector institutions. Excludes private sector institutions.

• Includes natural science, mathematics and computing, medical and health related sciences, engineering and technology, architecture and town planning, trade, craft and industrial programmes, agriculture, forestry and fishery.

■ Includes private sector institutions and correspondence courses.

⋆ Includes estimates of successful completions of nursing and paramedical courses under the auspices of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Teachers (Duties)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any proposals to seek to control the time teachers spend on duties outside the classroom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: No; talks between the parties under the leadership of an independent panel appointed by ACAS are now in progress on, among other things, a clear definition of the contractual duties and responsibilities of teachers and their employers. The Education Bill includes a provision in clause 37 giving the Secretary of State an enabling power which, if used, would require LEAs to appraise the performance of teachers in discharging their duties and engaging in other activities. I refer my hon. Friend to what my right hon. Friend the Earl of Swinton said on this matter in another place on 1 May at columns 399-402.

Teachers (Deployment)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any proposals to encourage better deployment of teachers between schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the White Paper "Better Schools", the Government emphasised their aim to improve the effectiveness with which the school teacher force is deployed across and within local education authorities. We recognised that authorities had difficulty

relating Government policies for the size of the teacher force nationally to their decisions on local teacher numbers, and encouraged the establishment of a joint official working group with the local authority associations. This group has recommended that national planning horizons should be established for teacher numbers, and appropriate guidance should be issued to local education authorities. In considering our response to the group's advice, we shall want to take account, among other things, of the scope for local authorities to rationalise their school provision and thus to mitigate the staffing diseconomies associated with smaller schools.

School Buildings

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with the progress made by local education authorities in closing redundant school buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Local education authorities are expected to exceed existing targets for the removal of surplus places up to 1987; but much remains to be done, particularly in secondary schools where, against a stock of 4·1 million places, pupil numbers are projected to fall from 3·5 million in 1985 to 2·8 million in 1991. My right hon. Friend plans to promulgate new targets for the period to 1991 shortly.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will undertake a new survey of the state of repair and decoration of schools in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 10 February at column 320, regarding the sample survey of school building improvement needs currently being carried out by my Department. This seeks information on work, which may include repair and decoration, considered necessary to bring the school buildings in the sample which will be retained in 1991-92 to the defined standard of physical condition. The survey covers England only; schools in Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Teachers (Pensions and Lump Sums)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will indicate the length of time that his Department will take to complete the payment of pensions and lump sum arrears to teachers whose last day of service was on or after 1 April 1985.

Mr. Chris Patten: Approximately 16,000 superannuation awards fall to be revised as a result of the late 1985 teachers' pay settlement, of which some 4,000 will have been processed by the end of this month. Bearing in mind the need to give priority during the summer to first-time awards for some 12,000 teachers expected to retire at the end of the summer term, the Department estimates that the remaining pension revisions will be completed by the end of November.

Teacher Training

Mr. Gorst asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many entrants into teacher training courses there have been in each of the past five years in *(a)* total and *(b)* scientific subjects; and if he is satisfied that there is currently no shortage of suitably qualified teachers in these fields.

Mr. Chris Patten: The number of entrants into initial teacher training courses in England in each of the past four academic years is given in the following table. Comparable data for the academic year 1981-82 are not available.

Recruitment to initial teacher training in England

Academic years	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	**1984-85*	*1985-86*
Primary and secondary	15,756	14,861	15,404	15,435
Secondary only	9,712	8,029	7,667	7,330
Secondary sciences	1,790	1,400	1,279	1,215

*The figures for 1984-85 exclude a small number of entrants to degree courses with concurrent certificate in education.

We are satisfied that for most areas of the curriculum there is a sufficient supply of teachers nationally to meet the needs of schools, but we are concerned about continuing difficulties with the supply of suitably qualified teachers in the physical sciences, in mathematics and in craft, design and technology.

Institute of Psychiatry

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information he has on the change in the number of clinical posts at the Institute of Psychiatry in each of the years 1979 to 1986;

(2) what information he has on the number of posts at the Institute of Psychiatry which have fallen vacant in the last two years, and as to how many remain vacant.

Mr. Walden: The numbers of clinical staff in post at the Institute of Psychiatry at 31 December each year, were as follows:

	Numbers
1979	45
1980	51
1981	46
1982	50
1983	61
1984	66
1985	60

I understand that there are currently five clinical vacancies at the institute.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the rôle of the Institute of Psychiatry in the training of doctors, psychologists and nurses in the treatment of psychiatric patients, the mentally handicapped and the elderly.

Mr. Walden: The Institute of Psychiatry is a school of the University of London and a federated institute of the British Postgraduate Medical Federation. In association with the Maudsley and Bethlem Royal hospitals, it provides clinical training in psychiatry. The institute also provides training in clinical psychology. It is a major centre for research into aspects of mental disorder, and offers a range of clinical or laboratory-based higher degree courses.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the

projected deficits of the Institute of Psychiatry in the years *(a)* 1985-86, *(b)* 1986-87, *(c)* 1987-88, *(d)* 1988-89 and *(e)* 1989-1990.

Mr. Walden: None.

Education Support Grants

Mrs. Roe asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the amount of expenditure and the activities to be supported through education support grants in the financial year 1987-88.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Education (Grant and Awards) Act 1984 empowers the holder of my office to pay education support grant to local education authorities in England. It is intended that expenditure supported through education support grant will amount to some £53 million in 1987-88. I propose to devote £31·5 million of this total of planned expenditure to committed expenditure arising from projects first approved in earlier years. About £10·1 million will be available to support new starts on existing activities and £11·3 million on new activities. Grant will be paid at the rate of 70 per cent. on the amount of expenditure approved for support through education support grants.

Following consultations with representatives of the local education authorities, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have today laid before Parliament draft regulations setting out the new purposes for or in connection with which we propose to pay education support grants in 1987-88. Those regulations will amend the Education Support Grants Regulations 1984 and will be subject to approval by both Houses of Parliament.

The following tables show the activities on which expenditure is committed in 1987-88 and the new extended activities which I propose should rank for education support grant in England in 1987-88, the amount of expenditure for each; a provisional assessment of the number of LEAs likely to be supported and the length of support. The precise division of the £21·4 million available for new and extended activities between these purposes and the number of authorities to be supported will not be settled until applications have been received and considered.

Should Parliament approve the regulations, a circular inviting bids will be sent to all education authorities in England. I propose to ask authorities to submit bids by 1 October and I further propose to announce decisions on applications in December.

Committed Expenditure on Activities begun in earlier years

Category	*Committed Expenditure to be supported through ESG in 1987-88 £ million*	*Number of LEAs to be supported*	*Total length of support*
The teaching of mathematics in schools	6·3	94	4 years
The teaching of science and technology as part of primary education	7·7	92	4 years
Pilot projects to develop records of achievement for young people in secondary schools and colleges	2·3	14	3 years
Pilot projects to improve the quality of education provided in primary schools in urban areas	0·8	12	5 years
Pilot projects to improve the quality or the range of the curriculum provided in primary schools in rural areas	1·3	15	5 years
Pilot projects to meet the educational needs of those from ethnic minorities	1·9	44	Up to 5 years
The development, provision and appraisal of courses of initial training for school governors	0·1	10	2 years
Action within the education service to combat the misuse of drugs	2·3	96	2 years
The management and appraisal of school teachers	1·0	*	Up to 5 years
The provision of retraining and updating courses directed towards the needs of industry and commerce (PICKUP)	1·4	61	3 years
The development of the use of information technology at further education establishments, by providing equipment, preparing or providing course material and computer software and training teachers employed at such establishments	3·4	58	5 years
The planning, development and co-ordination of provision to meet the educational needs, including the need for guidance of those who are unemployed (excluding those currently receiving full-time education)	1·7	42	2 years
The provision of services to support parents in the teaching of children under five with special educational needs	1·3	44	3 years
Total	31·5		

* This expenditure has yet to be allocated; it is hoped to do so during the course of 1986-87.

Expenditure on New Starts

Category	*New expenditure envisaged to be supported through ESG in Financial Year 1987-88 £ million*	*Provisional assessment of number of LEAs to be supported*	*Likely length of support*
The provision of retraining and updating courses directed towards the needs of industry and commerce (PICKUP)	0·8	16	3 years
The development of the use of information technology at further education establishments, by providing equipment, preparing or providing course material and computer software, and training teachers employed at such establishments.	4·8	All	3 years
The planning, development and co-ordination of provision to meet the educational needs, including the need for guidance, of those who are unemployed (excluding those currently receiving full-time education).	1·75	About half	Up to 2 years
The provision of data processing equipment, accessories and software for use in the management of further education establishments.	1·5	Most	2 years
The provision of services to support parents in the teaching of children under five with special educational needs.	0·5	10-20	3 years
The provision of computerised learning aids at further education establishments for use by students with special educational needs.	0·5	30-40	1 year
The strengthening of College-employer links to improve the quality and relevance of NAFE provision.	0·25	10	1 year
* The provision of books and equipment for GCSE examination courses in schools.	10·0	All	2 years
* Pilot projects to develop the use of the spoken word by pupils aged 5 to 16.	0·3	5	3 years
* Pilot projects to promote social responsibility among young people.	1·0	10-20	5 years
Total	21·4		

* New activities to be supported in 1987-88.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Aid

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the account taken by the European Community when assessing the extent of regional aid to be made available to an area and of the impact on existing and prospective industry of the character of existing industries in that area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In deciding whether to approve member states' own regional aids or whether to grant aid from the European regional development fund, the European Commission has regard to a range of factors, including the relative need of the area in question for assistance with economic development. The character of existing industries in an area may be related to its degree of need. For certain ERDF purposes, areas which are dependent on industries which are particularly associated with Community policies may receive more favourable treatment.

Generics (UK) Ltd.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the ownership of Generics (UK) Ltd.

Mr. Howard: Information on the ownership of companies is submitted to the Registrar of Companies once a year on the company's annual return, and on other returns when new shares are allotted. This information, together with other details about the company, is publicly available. The latest documents available on the public record show the following as members:

Name of Shareholder	*Number of Shares held at 7 May 1985 (1985 Annual Return)*	*Additional Shares Allotted at 28 June 1985*
Interpharm Inc	360	30,240
Julian Neil Tabatznik	69	5,796
Anthony S. Tabatznik	69	5,796
Bernard Samuels	30	2,520
Lawrence G. Stolzenberg	24	2,016
Henry Brian Davis	24	2,016
George Calvin Davies	12	1,008
Robert Miller	12	1,008

Subject to any restrictions the company's articles of Association place on transfers of shares, there may have been changes in ownership since these dates. The company is required to hold an up-to-date register of its shareholders, which may be inspected at its registered office.

Japan (Leather Industry)

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what evidence he has of infringements of the general agreement on tariffs and trade by Japan in relation to quantitative restrictions, licences, and other methods of protecting the Japanese tanning industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: In May 1984, the GATT Council adopted a report which found that quantitative restrictions applied by Japan to imports of leather were nullifying or impairing benefits accruing to other contracting parties under GATT. In accordance with the GATT Council decision, Japan eliminated these quantitative restrictions on 1 April, while introducing a tariff quota system. The Community has reluctantly accepted the new arrangements in the course of negotiations with Japan in GATT. The tariff quota offers British and Community exporters improving access to the Japanese market for at least five years. We hope that the arrangements will be further improved in future.

Food Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, further to his answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *351*, on food imports, whether he will provide the 1984 figures for the countries listed in 1970 and not in 1984 and the 1970 figures for countries listed in 1984 and not 1970.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table.

United Kingdom Trade

	*Share of United Kingdom food imports**	*United Kingdom share of imports of manufactures†*
1970		
Italy	1·5	6·3
Belgium/Luxembourg	0·8	7·2
FR of Germany	0·6	5·5
1984		
Canada	2·8	2·0
S. Africa	1·8	‡15·3
Australia	0·6	7·4

* Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) Section 0.
† Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) Sections 5 to 8.
‡ United Kingdom share of OECD countries' exports of manufactures.
Source: OECD.

Soviet Union (High Technology Exports)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what precautions are being taken to prevent highly sophisticated industrial products for the purpose of military or nuclear use being sold to the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Strategically sensitive goods are subject to control under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1985. The Government's policy is not to grant licences for exports which would be likely to damage national security.

USSR (Market Access)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the access available to United Kingdom firms to the market in the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am aware that some firms experience difficulties in obtaining access to reliable market information and to end users in the Soviet Union, but have no reason to believe that United Kingdom firms are treated any differently from other Western European companies. The Department takes the opportunity of Government-to-Government contacts, such as the joint commission, to raise these difficulties with the Soviet authorities.

Soviet Nuclear Accident

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment his Department has made of how British companies, trading with the Soviet Union in light industry, computers, fibres, furnishings and construction engineering will be affected by the Chernobyl disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have at present no reason to believe that British companies trading with the Soviet Union in these sectors will be seriously affected by the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

USSR (Trade Statistics)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the most recent figures available for the balance of imports and exports to and from the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The most recent figures available are the provisional figures for March 1986, which show a crude United Kingdom trade surplus of £5·3 million. This compares with a crude surplus of £34·2 million for the first quarter of 1986.

USSR (Construction Industries)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what financial assistance Her Majesty's Government are providing to the Soviet Union, in order to expand the construction industries in the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: None — nor do I see any reason why Her Majesty's Government should do so.

Cannon Group (Takeover Bids)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the takeover bids promoted by the Cannon Group in the cinema industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The acquisition of Screen Entertainment by the Cannon Group is currently being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading. My right hon. Friend will make his decision on whether it should be referred for further investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the light of the Director General's advice. The Director General is not aware of any other bids for United Kingdom companies involving the Cannon Group.

Foodstuffs (Importation)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what duties, levies and quotas are imposed on the import of foodstuffs from east Europe to the EEC; and if there are any significant differences in the duties, levies and quotas imposed on imports from East Germany to the Federal Republic of Germany by comparison with other east European countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: The current import duties charged by the Community are set out in the Official Journal of the European Communities, volume 28 number L331 of 9 December 1985; the current quotas on imports of East European products are set out in Official Journal volume 28 number L382 of 31 December 1985; and the levies which are charged by the Community are also published in the Official Journal, but these change frequently, there is no consolidated list of them, and it would be disproportionately costly to list them here.

East German products entering the Federal Republic of Germany are treated more favourably than those from other East European countries, in accordance with the protocol on German internal trade annexed to the treaty establishing the European Economic Community.

Inner German Trade Agreement

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what alleged abuses of the inner German trade agreement have been reported to him; what representations his Department has made to the EEC Commission about the alleged abuses; and what has been the result of these representations.

Mr. Alan Clark: Since 1980, my Department has received 12 representations about alleged abuses of the inner German trade agreement. The complainants were able to supply detailed evidence in one case relating to powdered egg, which the European Commission has investigated at our request. But to date it has proved difficult to produce conclusive evidence that products resulting from inner German trade are adversely affecting the Community's egg products market. The Commission has however undertaken to continue to monitor developments closely.

ENERGY

Polkemmet Bing

3. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his latest contacts with the National Coal Board about the smouldering bing at Polkemmet.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand from the chief scientist at NCB's area laboratory in Edinburgh that the fire at the Polkemmet bing has been extinguished and that the contractors are now tidying up and landscaping the site.

Home Insulation Scheme

8. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will expand the home insulation scheme to incorporate a fuller range of energy saving methods within the home.

Mr. David Hunt: The 1986-87 homes insulation scheme allocation is expected fully to meet total demand, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has said that he will bear in mind Energy Efficiency Year in considering any applications for additional allocations.

Energy Conservation

9. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what fresh plans he has to provide financial assistance to companies in order to encourage investment in the conservation of energy.

Mr. David Hunt: My energy efficiency office continually encourages firms to take advantage of the highly attractive investments which energy efficiency measures offer. Its latest initiative has been to set up 2,000 free half-day surveys by expert energy consultants.

Gas Bill

10. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many representations he has received, respectively, in favour and against the Gas Bill.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have received a large number of representations. Only a small minority join the Opposition in opposing the privatisation of British Gas.

Energy Scientific Adviser

14. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the salary and length of contract for the recently appointed energy scientific adviser in his Department.

Mr. Goodlad: The recently appointed chief scientist and head of energy technology division in the Department of Energy is on secondment from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for a period of two to three years. His salary is equivalent to that of a Grade 3 (under-secretary) in the open structure.

Energy Efficiency Campaign

16. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much has been spent to date in advertising the energy efficiency campaign run by his Department; and which advertising agencies have been used.

Mr. David Hunt: I am hoping this year to obtain £20 of outside advertising expenditure for every £1 of Government advertising.

Advertising expenditure by my Department on energy efficiency was as follows:

Agency	*Year*	*Amount spent with agency* £
Young and Rubicam	1983-84	1,630,000
Young and Rubicam	1984-85	1,660,000
Doyle Dane Bernbach	1984-85	2,567,000
Doyle Dane Bernbach	1985-86	8,987
Saatchi and Saatchi	1985-86	4,182,000

Energy Efficiency Year

18. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will report the latest progress with his Department's energy efficiency year programmes.

Mr. David Hunt: Over 550 Energy Efficiency Year events have already taken place. Our television and press advertising campaign promoting the Monergy message has generated a greatly increased awareness.

Severn Tidal Power Group

19. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he plans to publish the feasibility study of the Severn tidal power group.

29. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received about the construction of a Severn barrage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is yet in a position to state when he will make a statement on his conclusions on the Severn tidal power group's report on the Severn barrage, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: As I said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd) on 18 April, the Secretary of State for Energy has received the report of the Severn tidal power group assessing the viability of a private sector barrage across the Severn estuary.

We are considering the report. The Severn tidal power group hopes to release its report shortly and we will place copies in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament at that time.

Nuclear Power Generation

20. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give figures for the percentage of electricity generated by nuclear power in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: The figures, as percentages of electricity available from the United Kingdom public supply system, are as follows:

	Per cent.
1983	17·6
1984	18·6
1985	20·5

Local Authorities (Energy Efficiency)

21. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much money he estimates might be saved in 1986 by local authorities implementing good energy efficiency practice; and what incentives are available to both them and ratepayers in this respect.

Mr. David Hunt: The Audit Commission has identified potential savings of at least £135 million a year through improved energy efficiency in local government buildings in England and Wales. These savings themselves are the incentive for the necessary measures to be taken.

NCB (Chairman)

22. **Mr. Orme** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss the future plans for the industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: I meet the chairman of the National Coal Board regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry, including its plans for the future.

Coal Prices

23. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Energy by what percentage the average price of coal to the domestic consumer has changed since 1979; and how this compares with gas and electricity.

Mr. David Hunt: Between 1979 and 1985 the current price index for domestic coal rose by 97 per cent. In the same period the current price indices for domestic gas and electricity rose by 121 per cent. and 82 per cent., respectively.

Oil and Gas Exploration

24. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make a statement on the current level of oil and gas exploration activity on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: A total of 79 exploration and appraisal wells have been drilled on the United Kingdom's continental shelf and onshore in the United Kingdom in 1986 in the period to 24 April.

Nuclear Power

25. **Sir Trevor Skeet** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received advocating the increased use of nuclear power in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: There is widespread demand for cheaper electricity from industry and in the home. The Government believes that nuclear power, subject as it is to the most stringent safeguards, has an essential contribution to make in the provision of electric power economically.

British Gas

26. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment his Department has made on the impact of the fall in oil prices on the privatisation of British Gas.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The offer for sale of shares in British Gas will take full account of prevailing market circumstances.

Yorkshire Coalfield

27. **Mr. Mason** asked the Secretary of State for Energy, when he next meets the chairman of the National Coal Board if he will discuss with him the future of the Yorkshire coalfield.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the NCB regularly and discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Welsh Coalfields

28. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's estimate of future investment in the Welsh coalfields.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government agree an overall capital expenditure limit with the NCB, but it is for the board to determine levels of investment in individual areas.

Oil-fired Power Stations

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many tonnes of coal equivalent was burned in oil-fired power stations in March and April; and what were the stations.

Mr. Goodlad: Figures for fuel used in the generation of electricity in March and April will appear in future editions of "Energy Trends", which is published monthly. The actual stations used in meeting demand for electricity are an operational matter for the generating boards.

North Sea Output

31. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement of the latest level of output of oil and gas from the United Kingdom sector of the North sea.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The most recent figures are for March, when daily offshore production is provisionally estimated to have been 2·6 million barrels of crude oil and 6·1 billion cu ft of natural gas.

NCB (Non-mining Activities)

32. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss the privatisation programme for the non-mining activities of the National Coal Board.

Mr. David Hunt: The organisation of the National Coal Board's non-mining activities is a matter for the board. In the past five years the following NCB subsidiary interests have been disposed of to the private sector:

Redwood Corex (Services) Ltd.
Associated Heat Services plc.
J. H. Sankey & Son Ltd.

The board is currently completing disposal of its interest in Scottish Brick Corporation Ltd.

Boiler Conversion Schemes

33. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy in how many cases the maximum grant has been paid in respect of boiler conversion schemes during the last two years; what proportion of the total number of grants paid this represents.

Mr. David Hunt: Over the last two years 132 projects have been offered maximum assistance under the scheme, representing some 62 per cent. of all offers made in the period. Of these, 93 have been accepted, some 66 per cent. of all acceptances during the period, 28 were rejected and 11 are awaiting acceptance.

Oil Prices

34. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the effects of falling oil prices on the future of the coal industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is still to early to judge the likely extent and duration of the recent sharp decline in oil prices, which, together with imported coal and other fuels, have increased the competitive pressure on the NCB. It is therefore too soon to assess the implications for the future of the coal industry.

Building Regulations

35. **Mr Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received concerning the benefits of changing building regulations to improve energy efficiency.

Mr. David Hunt: Firms and trade associations in the building energy efficiency industry have made representations to me concerning the scope for improving comfort and reducing fuel bills through cost-effective improvements to the standards of energy efficiency set in the building regulations.

Dungeness B

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total construction time and final commissioning date for the Dungeness B power station; and how these figures compare with the originally estimated construction time and commissioning date.

Mr. Goodlad: I have asked the chairman of the CEGB to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimated final cost of the Dungeness B power station; and how this compares in real terms with the original estimated cost.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the then hon. Member for Dearne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) on 8 March 1982 at column *289*.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current capacity of Dungeness B power station in megawatts sent out; how this compares with the original design capacity; what is the total output to date in megawatts; and what was the original estimated annual output.

Mr. Goodlad: Maximum output obtained to date at Dungeness B has been 580 MW generated from the first unit (R21) and 440 MW generated from the second unit (R22), equating to a total of the 900 MW sent out. The original design capacity was 660 MW generated from each unit equating to a total of 1200 MW sent out. It is expected that the final output achieved will be close to this design output. Total output achieved to date has been 4·6 million MW hours. Original estimated annual output was in the region of 7·5 million MW hours.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current cost of producing one megawatt hour of electricity at Dungeness B advanced gas cooled reactor power station; and what is the equivalent figure at Drax coal-fired stations.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall arrange for the CEGB to write to the hon. Member.

Electricity Generation

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the present mix of electricity generated in the United Kingdom according to the source of generation, coal, oil, nuclear or hydro measured as percentages; and how that mix compares with that in 1979.

Mr. Goodlad: The figures, for production of electricity by the electricity generating boards on a fuel-used basis for 1979 and 1985, are as follows:

Electricity production, public electricity supply in the United Kingdom (fuel input basis)

percentage share

	1979	*1985*
Coal*	73·0	64·6
Oil	14·9	15·7
Nuclear	10·1	17·7
Hydro	1·5	1·6
Natural gas	0·5	0·4
	100·0	100·0

* Includes small quantities of coke.

Sizewell Inquiry

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much time in days has been devoted to the Sizewell B inquiry to date.

Mr. Goodlad: The inquiry sat for 340 days between 11 January 1983 and 7 March 1985. Since it closed the inspector has been assessing the evidence and preparing his report. As my right hon. Friend announced on 13 March, at column *555*, the inspector has told him that he hopes to deliver the report in September.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the total cost to public funds to date of the Sizewell B inquiry; and if he will provide a breakdown of the costs.

Mr. Goodlad: Costs up to 31 March 1986 falling to my Department were some £890,000. Other costs incurred to the same date in running the inquiry and recoverable from the CEGB by agreement with the board total approximately £2,299,000. Costs incurred by parties to the inquiry, including the CEGB's own costs, are a matter for them and are not included in this total.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give a general direction to the electricity boards to reduce their prices to consumers in view of the fall in their fuel costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Reductions in fuel prices automatically reduce the monthly bills of industrial and commercial customers. The Central Electricity Generating Board and the National Coal Board are discussing coal prices in the light of their assessment of the present uncertain oil market. They are seeking to reach a commercial agreement which will enable this changed market situation to be suitably reflected in the price that the CEGB pays for NCB coal. The intention of the electricity supply industry is that all customers, including domestic customers, should benefit.

NCB (Redundancy Payments)

Mr. Ray Powell asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many employees of the National Coal Board opencast executive have received payments from the European Coal and Steel Community fund for redundancy, and, under what provision of articles 49 to 53 of the treaty of Paris.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fruit Machines (Tokens)

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to seek to amend the law regarding the exchange of tokens from fruit machines for cash or kind; and what representations he has received from the Gaming Board on this matter.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have no plans to amend the law and have received no representations from the Gaming Board on this subject.

Police-Population Ratios

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the ratio of police to population in *(a)* Cardiff and *(b)* Cardiff, West.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable that the police/population ratios of Cardiff central and Cardiff greater divisions, which are the two territorial divisions covering Cardiff in the South Wales constabulary, are as follows:

	Ratio
Cardiff Central Division	1:213
Cardiff Greater Division	1:575

South Wales Police (Recruitment)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were recruited by South Wales police constabulary between 1975 and 1980 and 1980 and 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information is as follows:

South Wales Constabulary

Year	*Number of Police Officers Recruited*	*Strength on 31st December*
1975	250	2,962
1976	210	2,982
1977	113	2,872
1978	170	2,886
1979	213	3,025
1980	126	3,068
Total	1,082	
1980	126	3,068
1981	101	3,082
1982	133	3,096
1983	87	3,082
1984	123	3,106
1985	95	3,064
Total	665	

Some police vacancies have been held in south Wales during the past year, but the force continues to recruit to replace wastage. I understand that finance is available in the current financial year to enable the force to fill its existing vacancies, and arrangements are in hand for it to do so as soon as possible.

Parliamentary Boundaries

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those parliamentary constituencies currently being investigated by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission with a view to possible changes in their parliamentary boundaries; when he expects the Parlimentary Boundary Commission to report; if it is his intention to lay any orders to implement any changes during the lifetime of the current Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: A list of the 42 constituencies which are the subject of current interim review by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England was given in reply to a Question from my hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Mrs. Bottomley) on 24 February at Cols. 417-418. I understand that the Commission hopes to submit its final recommendations towards the end of this year, subject to the possible need to hold local inquiries and publish revised recommendations in the light of those inquiries. My right hon. Friend will then comply with his statutory duty to lay the commission's report before Parliament as soon as may be after its receipt, together with the draft of an Order in Council for implementing the commission's recommendations, with or without modifications.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will now authorise an increase of 26 police officers in the authorised establishment of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight police force.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend is considering, in consultation with Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and in the light of the specific needs of the force, the application of 29 April 1986 from the Hampshire police authority for an increase of 28 police posts in the authorised establishment of the force. He will reach a decision as soon as the consultations have been completed.

News International Plant, Wapping

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests have taken place at Wapping in connection with the print dispute from 21 April to the latest available date.

Mr. Giles Shaw: One hundred and seventy one, up to 9 May.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to the hourly average earnings of industrial production workers in sterling at 1986 prices for *(a)* 1960, *(b)* 1970, *(c)* 1980 and the latest available date, for (i) Great Britain, (ii) Sweden, (iii) Canada, (iv) the United States of America, (v) West Germany, (vi) France, (vii) Italy and (viii) Japan respectively.

Mr. Lang: Harmonised statistics of hourly earnings are only available for European Community countries; the earliest common date is October 1972 and the latest is October 1983.

The available information is given in the following table. It relates to gross hourly earnings (including overtime and before tax and social security contributions) of manual workers in manufacturing industries. The figures can be used to show trends over time in real hourly earnings in each country, but since they make no allowance for changes in exchange rates over the period, they are not appropriate for making comparisons between the level of earnings in different countries.

Average gross hourly earnings of manual workers in manufacturing industries
*£ sterling at February 1986 prices and exchange rates**

	October 1972	*October 1980*	*October 1983*
United Kingdom	3·12	3·32	3·50
Germany (FR)	3·99	4·93	4·91
France	2·63	3·51	3·76
Italy	2·37	3·34	3·59

Source:
Eurostat 'Earnings in Industry and Services — 1984/2' and 'Consumer Price Index—1986/2'; OECD 'Main Economic Indicators April 1986' and 'Historical Statistics 1964-83'.

* The estimates were revalued to February 1986 prices using relevant national consumer price indices and then converted to £ sterling using February 1986 exchange rates.

Keyboard Productivity (Scotland) Limited

Dame Judith Hart asked the Paymaster General what arrangement he is making for the payment by the Manpower Services Commission of arrears due to employers under the YTS trainee scheme following the liquidation of Keyboard as a managing agent.

Mr. Lang: Although the Manpower Services Commission has no legal obligation to pay the arrears due to employers who, as work experience providers, paid YTS trainees their allowances on behalf of Keyboard Productivity (Scotland) Limited, in the circumstances of the case, the commission will honour legitimate claims for such arrears.

For expenditure incurred on allowances up to and including 25 April 1986, work experience providers should submit their claims through the liquidator, Arthur Young and Company at George house, George square, Glasgow in the form that the liquidator prescribes. The liquidator will pass the claims to the commission.

For expenditure incurred on allowances on or after 26 April 1986, work experience providers should apply directly to the commission's local training division area office.

Industrial Deaths

Sir David Price asked the Paymaster General how many people were killed in the coal mining industry for each of the last 10 years; and what were the equivalent figures for those killed in the nuclear industry.

Mr. Lang: The available information is given in the table.

Fatal accidents reported in the Health and Safety Executive to employees at work in:

Year	*Coal mining industry*	**Nuclear industry*
1975	64	0
1976	50	2

Year	Coal mining industry	*Nuclear industry
1977	40	0
1978	63	2
1979	46	0
1980	42	2
1981	35	0
1982	38	2
1983	30	1
1984	†19	0
‡1985	†25	0

* Includes employees at sites operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board, The South of Scotland Electricity Generating Board, British Nuclear Fuels plc and establishments of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.
† Figures affected by consequences of the miners strike (began March 1984, ended March 1985).
‡ Provisional.

Job Security Clearance

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Paymaster General what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the use of job security clearance in respect of persons from Northern Ireland applying for certain sensitive posts in Great Britain; to what types of post such clearance applies; and what assessment he has made of the effects on the ability of applicants from Northern Ireland to compete for posts with other candidates who are not subject to such clearance.

Mr. Luce: I have been asked to reply.

I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

Nimrod AEW Project

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the Nimrod AEW project.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There is nothing I can usefully add at this stage to the very full statement I made to the House in the course of the debate on the Royal Air Force on 26 February 1986 at columns 962-964.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence by what method the Government assess the amount of chemical warfare agent in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' stockpile.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given him on 17 May 1985 by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement at column 266.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria are used in deciding which Irish regiments should be posted to Northern Ireland; and how these criteria apply to the presence and rôle of the Ulster Defence Regiment in the Province.

Mr. Stanley: Irish regiments have not generally been deployed in Northern Ireland for a variety of reasons, not least the additional strain this would place on soldiers and their families.

The Ulster Defence Regiment was formed in 1970 as a result of the Hunt committee's recommendation that a locally recruited, part-time, military defence force be raised to assist the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The regiment was therefore raised under the Reserve Forces Act to serve in Northern Ireland with a specific task in mind. Its members join on the understanding that they will not be asked to serve outside the Province, aside from the possibility of short periods of training; this is particularly significant to the part-time members who make up the majority of the regiment and who have civilian jobs as well.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Trade Union Act 1984

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if Her Majesty's Government will seek to extend the Trade Union Act 1984 to Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: The possibility of bringing forward legislative proposals for Northern Ireland similar to the 1984 Act is being considered.

St. Joseph's Primary School, Carryduff

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the enrolment at St. Joseph's primary school, Saintfield road, Carryduff, in each of the past five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

*1982	*1983	*1984	*1985	*1986
298	263	275	294	294

*From January.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if a patrolman has now been appointed to assist pupils to cross the main Belfast/Saintfield roads to attend St. Joseph's primary school, Carryduff; if there was any difficulty in attracting applicants for this position; and if he is in a position to state the sources of salary for the person appointed to carry out the responsibilities of patrolman.

Dr. Mawhinney: A patrolman was appointed in 1981 and remains in post. Any question concerning difficulty in attracting applicants to the post does not, therefore, arise at present. As an employee of the South-Eastern education and library board, his wages are paid by that board.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether enrolments at St. Joseph's primary school, Carryduff, have increased during the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement about proposals to improve road safety for pupils attending St. Joseph's primary school, Saintfield road, Carryduff.

Dr. Mawhinney: Annual enrolments have fluctuated within a range of 263 to 310 pupils; the current enrolment of 294 (January 1986) is almost identical to that of 10 years ago (296). There are no specific proposals for additional road safety measures in the vicinity of the school.

Belfast-Saintfield Road (Speed Limit)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the maximum speed limit has been increased on the main Belfast-Saintfield road during the past 10 years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The speed limit on a section of the Belfast to Saintfield road between the outskirts of Belfast and Carryduff was increased from 40 mph to 50 mph in 1981.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce legislation to give statutory force to the Anglo-Irish agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: The Anglo-Irish agreement has been approved by Parliament, and required no amendment to domestic law to come into force. The Government retain responsibility for the decisions and administration of government in Northern Ireland and statutory powers and duties remain as they were before the agreement came into force.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why there is a divergence in the figures given by Her Majesty's Government and those given by the Royal Ulster Constabulary in 1985 for explosions and for firearms and weapons incidents.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *36*]: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to figures for 1985 in the answer my right hon. Friend gave him on 27 February, at column *637-8*, and to those in table 3 of the appendix to the Chief Constable's 1985 annual report.

The separate figures given in the former for explosions and neutralisations add up to the figure in the latter for the "bombs". A separate figure was given in the answer for "shots heard"; in the Chief Constable's report this is subsumed in the overall "shootings" total.

Finally, the figure that was given for the recovery of firearms includes mortars; the chief constable's does not.

THE ARTS

Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme

42. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Minister for the Arts what has been the split between the Greater London area and the regions of the business sponsorship incentive scheme participants.

Mr. Luce: Under the business sponsorship incentive scheme, 70 per cent. of award money—£1·3 million—has gone to the regions outside the Greater London area; this represents 77 per cent. of the total number of awards.

Trade Union Sponsorship

43. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement about trade union sponsorship of the arts.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, (Mr. Banks) earlier today.

South Bank

Sir David Price asked the Minister for the Arts what is the estimated annual administrative cost of running the South Bank following the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Luce: The estimated staff costs for 1986-87 are £2·979 million.

CIVIL SERVICE

Performance Bonus Scheme

48. **Mr. Dickens** asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on the progress of the three-year experimental performance bonus scheme announced in December 1984.

Mr. Luce: The three-year experimental performance bonus scheme is being carefully monitored, with the help of outside consultants. We expect to have a report from them in the summer on the first year of the scheme's operation.

Equal Opportunities

Sir David Price asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is his policy for promoting equal opportunities in the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Equal opportunities in the Civil Service are promoted by removing any form of direct or indirect discrimination on grounds of sex or ethnic origins and by publicising the policy as widely as resources permit.

Chief Information Officer, 10 Downing Street

47. **Mr. Tam Dalyell** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what representations he has had from the First Division Association about the post of chief information officer at 10 Downing street.

Mr. Luce: None.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Servants (Statistics)

49. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the breakdown between non-industrial and industrial civil servants of the 133,000 net reduction in Civil Service manpower in the period April 1979 to April 1985.

Mr. Brooke: Of the net reduction of 133,000 civil servants between 1 April 1979 and 1 April 1985, 68,000 were non-industrial and 65,000 were industrial civil servants.

Financial Management Initiative

50. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on progress on the financial management initiative launched in May 1982.

Mr. Brooke: The financial management initiative has successfully stimulated better planning and control in the public services. We have begun to see the valuable results.

Objectives are set with clearer targets for what is to be achieved, by when and at what cost. There are many more measures of output and performance and regular evaluations of what has been achieved. Individual managers are much more aware of their costs and responsibilities, and are increasingly managing budgets which give them the initiative to make savings and improve the effectiveness of services. Work continues in each Department to make these approaches more widespread.

Competitive Tendering and Privatisation

51. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his policy for an extension of competitive tending and privatisation by Government Departments.

Mr. Moore: Our policy is to transfer work out of the public service wherever this is commensurate with sound management and provides good value for money for the taxpayer. As the House knows, Government Departments are now required to test the market in specified areas.

Mortgage Interest

Mr. Maxton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the total number of mortgagors in *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* the south-east of England receiving mortgage interest relief; what was the average mortgage interest relief per mortgagor in 1985-86 in (i) Greater London and (ii) the south-east of England; and what was the cost to the Exchequer of mortgage interest relief in 1985-86 in (1) Greater London and (2) the south-east of England;

(2) what is the total number of mortgagors receiving mortgage interest relief in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom; what was the average mortgage interest relief per mortgagor per annum in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom in 1985-86; and what was the total cost to the Exchequer of mortgage interest relief in 1985-86 in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moore: The information is in the table. The analysis by place of residence is approximate.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief 1985-86

	Number of mortgagors (thousands)	*Direct revenue cost of relief* *Total cost £ million*	*Cost per mortgagor £*
England	7,170	4,250	590
Scotland	400	270	680
Wales	320	170	530
Northern Ireland	110	60	550
United Kingdom	8,000	4,750	590
Of which:			
Greater London	830	570	690
SE (including Greater London)	2,920	2,010	690

Mr. Raynsford asked the Chancellor of the Exchquer if he will publish a table showing the total value of mortgage interest relief forgone as tax income by the Inland Revenue, the total number of recipients of this relief and the average amount of relief received per mortgagor, respectively, in the United Kingdom, in England and in Greater London in each tax year for 1978-79 to 1985-86 and give an estimate for 1986-87.

Mr. Moore: The latest estimates are in the table. Estimates for years up to 1982-83 are based on the surveys of personal incomes. From 1983-84 onwards, the figures include mortgages previously under the option mortgage scheme which was subsumed within the arrangements for giving mortgage interest relief at source. Detailed information by region is not available from Inland Revenue records for years from 1983-84 and the estimates for London and England are approximate.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

	Total cost £ million	*Number of mortgagors thousands*	*Average cost of relief £*
1978-79			
London	170	700	240
England	995	5,050	200
United Kingdom	1,110	5,650	200
1979-80			
London	230	750	310
England	1,300	5,250	250
United Kingdom	1,450	5,900	250
1980-81			
London	275	700	390
England	1,745	5,250	335
United Kingdom	1,960	5,900	335
1981-82			
London	280	650	430
England	1,830	5,250	350
United Kingdom	2,050	5,900	350
1982-83			
London	270	620	430
England	1,900	5,450	350
United Kingdom	2,150	6,180	350
*1983-84**			
London	330	760	440
England	2,460	6,720	370
United Kingdom	2,750	7,500	370
*1984-85**			
London	420	790	540
England	3,130	6,940	450
United Kingdom	3,500	7,750	450
*1985-86**			
London	570	830	690
England	4,250	7,170	590
United Kingdom	4,750	8,000	590
1986-87†*			
London	570	850	670
England	4,250	7,350	580
United Kingdom	4,750	8,200	580

* Provisional
† Forecast

Confidential Information (Compensation)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received regarding Treasury guidelines for compensation for persons

disclosing confidential information who have in consequence saved the taxpayer substantial sums of money.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received no representations since I replied to the hon. Member on 9 April.

Knitting Industry

Sir John Farr asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received from firms in the knitting industry complaining of the methods used by Inland Revenue staff to secure payment of taxes, including resort to distress proceedings when tax is one day overdue; if he will issue guidance to the Inland Revenue regarding the means used to secure payment of taxes and the criteria to be used in deciding on the point at which any legal proceedings should be instigated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have received representations from the Leicester and District Knitting Industry Association Ltd. about these and other matters of concern to its members, and I shall be replying shortly. Inland Revenue officials have a responsibility to collect tax which is overdue, but they carry out these duties in accordance with departmental instructions. If my hon. Friend has information suggesting that a particular case has been mishandled, I will be pleased to inquire into it.

EC Budget

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what important aspects of the European Economic Community Council's approach to the problem of budget discipline were not endorsed by the Assembly in its recent meeting with the Council.

Mr. Brooke: The delegation from the European Parliament spoke of its concern about the setting of reference framework limits for expenditure and made clear that it could not support the restraints which the Council's budget discipline conclusions implied for non-obligatory expenditure in areas such as the structural funds and new policies.

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the European Assembly has refused to discuss with the Council the reference framework for the 1987 European Economic Community budget.

Mr. Brooke: In a declaration issued following its meeting with the Council on 28 April, the European Parliament delegation claimed that a discussion of the 1987 reference framework did not make sense, given that there was no agreement on the general aims of budget discipline between the Council and the Parliament and given that the starting points of the discussion, and in particular the content of the supplementary budget for 1986, were not known.

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Her Majesty's Government will seek to ensure that when the presidents of the three European Economic Community institutions meet to discuss possible procedures for a budget discipline common to Council, Commission and Assembly, no additional financial power is granted to the Assembly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The powers of the European Parliament over budgetary matters are laid down in articles 199 to 209 of the EEC treaty. The treaty can be amended only by the unanimous agreement of the member states and their Parliaments.

Foreign Debt

Mr. Terlezki asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the foreign debt by Her Majesty's Government for the years 1975 to 1980 and 1980 to 1985; how much is now outstanding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

Official debt ($ million)

End-period	
1975	13,975
1976	19,358
1977	25,532
1978	23,424
1979	20,748
1980	17,390
1981	13,299
1982	12,146
1983	11,958
1984	11,283
1985	14,637

Further details are given in table 10.8 of CSO financial statistics.

Trustee Savings Bank

Mr. Dykes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the development of plans for the public flotation of the Trustee Savings Bank group following the enabling legislation of 1985.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The primary function conferred on the Treasury by the Trustee Savings Banks Act 1985 is the appointment of a vesting day under section 1(4) of that Act. The Treasury is considering the judgment given in the High Court on 28 April. I understand that Mr. Ross, the TSB depositor in whose case the Inner House in Scotland gave judgment on 12 March, has served notice of petition of appeal to the House of Lords.

Single European Act

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why Her Majesty's Government agreed to the harmonising of EEC turnover taxes and excise duties in the Single European Act; and what steps he is taking to achieve this objective.

Mr. Brooke: The Government have not agreed to the harmonisation of turnover taxes and excise duties in the Single European Act. The relevant article provides that indirect taxes should be harmonised

"to the extent that such harmonisation is necessary to ensure the establishment and operation of the internal market".

The question of how far harmonisation of indirect taxes is needed in order to remove barriers to trade is currently being studied by an ad hoc group of senior officials set up by the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers in January. Decisions on what action may be necessary to complete the internal market will be taken in the light of the group's report.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the EEC nations which apply value added tax to gas, electricity and food, respectively, and the rates concerned.

Mr. Brooke: The latest information available is as follows:

	Gas per cent.	*Electricity per cent.*	**Food per cent.*
Belgium	17	17	6
Denmark	22	22	22
France	18·6	18·6	†5·5
Germany	14	14	7
Ireland	10	0	‡0
Italy	9	9	‖2·9
Luxembourg	6	6	¶3·6
Netherlands	19	19	5
Portugal●	8(6)	8(6)	■0·8(6)
Spain	12	12	6

* Excluding luxury foods.
† With certain exceptions, e.g. sweets, ice-cream, margarine, which are standard-rated at 18·6 per cent.
‡ With certain exceptions, e.g. ice-cream, confectionery, chocolate, potato products, salted and roasted nuts, which are standard-rated at 25 per cent.
‖ The lower rate applies to essential foodstuffs such as bread, pasta and fish.
¶ The lower rate applies to meat, meat products, bread and butter.
● The rates shown in brackets apply to the autonomous regions of the Madeira and Azores Archipelagos.
■ The zero rate applies to unprepared foodstuffs.

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if any extra Customs and Excise staff have been deployed to investigation work as a result of the implementation of the Keith committee proposals for value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 May 1986, c. *530*]: The report of the Keith committee on the enforcement powers of the Revenue departments noted that there was a high resource cost in investigating VAT fraud to a criminal standard and it proposed a civil penalty procedure for the less serious acts of dishonesty. Section 13 of the Finance Act 1985, which allows for the civil treatment of VAT evasion, was enacted for this purpose. A substantial proportion of all evasions will now be investigated under this section and this may result in some reduction in the resources deployed on each such case. The overall staffing effect will not, however, be known until experience is gained of investigating evasions to a civil standard and there is knowledge of the number of appeals to the VAT tribunals.

EEC Rebate

Mr. Marlow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the text whereby the adjustment to the United Kingdom EEC rebate is dependent on supplementary EEC budgets.

Mr. Brooke: The methodology for the correction of the United Kingdom's EEC abatements is set out in COM(85)36, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. This document was debated extensively in Committee of the whole House during consideration of the European Communities (Finance) Act 1985 on 1 July 1985, at columns 78-116.

Economic Costs and Changing Prices (Report)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the report to the Treasury by an advisory group, accounting for economic costs and changing prices, completed in March 1986, has not been published.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Personal Equity Plans

Mrs. Roe asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement about the scheme for personal equity plans announced in his Budget speech.

Mr. Lawson: In my Budget speech I announced a scheme, known as the personal equity plan, under which investors will be able to invest up to £2,400 a year in shares. They will not pay capital gains tax on disposals nor income tax on reinvested dividends, provided they remain in the scheme for a qualifying period of between 12 and 24 months. Once the qualifying period has ended, investments may be realised without loss of tax relief.

The Inland Revenue has today published a document, as a basis for consultation, called "Personal Equity Plans: A Prospectus for Potential Plan Managers". It sets out the broad shape of the scheme and is designed for people interested in becoming plan managers. A copy of the prospectus has been deposited in the House of Commons Library.

The prospectus sets out the main criteria for the personal equity plan scheme:

—Qualifying investment will be confined to ordinary shares in United Kingdom-incorporated companies quoted on the stock exchange.
—There must be a clear link between the investor and his or her shares — so that investors may attend company AGMs, exercise voting rights, receive company information and benefit from shareholders' privileges.
— Dividends on investment must be ascribed to individual investors.
—Limits on holding assets in liquid form in plans.
—Charges by plan managers must be transparent.

The prospectus explains who can invest in the plans, how investments will be made, and what investments qualify. Special arrangements will be made to allow investment, up to a lower limit, in unit trusts and investment trusts.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

GCHQ

52. **Mr. Soley** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he intends to take against civil servants at Government communications headquarters who have rejoined a trade union.

Mr. Renton: Employees at GCHQ who have informed management that they have rejoined unions have been sent letters informing them that they will be subject to disciplinary proceedings for being in breach of their terms and conditions of service.

The director of GCHQ has advised the Head of the Civil Service that on present information he does not regard dismissal as an appropriate penalty in the proposed proceedings for those who have rejoined a union in the circumstances of the past months unless there are factors of which he is unaware.

Contadora Peace Process

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Contadora peace process includes measures to monitor border violations between Nicaragua and its neighbours; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Yes. The aim of the Contadora peace process is to reach a comprehensive negotiated and verifiable settlement of tensions in Central America. The draft Contadora Act includes an undertaking to end cross-border violations and subversion and makes provision for mechanisms to monitor infringements of the agreement once signed.

Guatemala

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria he uses when assessing the acceptability to Her Majesty's Government of elections held in Central American states; how far these criteria were fulfilled in recent elections in Guatemala; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. and learned Friend, the then Minister of State, the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) told the hon. Member on 16 April 1985, we expect voters to be offered a genuine political choice in elections and that the political parties should have equal freedom to campaign. In Guatemala, official Western observers were satisfied that both these criteria were met.

Windscale Fire

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the full report of the inquiry into the Windscale fire in 1975 was ever made available to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Eggar: No. We have however recently given the Soviet Government information on how that fire was tackled.

Nuclear Reactors (Safety)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether a safety assessment by the Central Electricity Generating Board of a nuclear reactor of a type akin to that at Chernobyl was ever made available to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Soviet Union

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current relations with the Soviet Union;

(2) what representations have been made to the Government of the Soviet Union regarding the lack of progress towards democracy in that country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We seek a more productive relationship with the Soviet Union based on dialogue and contact at many levels. To this end, we have promoted a full programme of bilateral exchanges covering many areas. This policy does not imply approval of the Soviet system of government. In discussions with the Russians and in the conference on security and co-operation in Europe we criticise aspects of Soviet practice, including the denial of human rights and of freedoms enjoyed in the West.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make representations to the Government of the Soviet Union regarding that country's adherence to the Vienna International Atomic Agency agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have made a number of requests for information to the Soviet Government about the Chernobyl accident. As a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency they are expected to provide full information about it. We anticipate that the agency will have a major role in assessing the consequences of the Chernobyl accident and recommending action for member states based on its conclusions.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are being taken by Her Majesty's Government to seek to encourage more visits by ordinary citizens from the Soviet Union to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We wish to promote better contacts between the peoples of the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, and more visits by Soviet citizens. We are currently pressing for better contacts at the conference on security and co-operation in Europe expert meeting on human contacts in Berne. Soviet abolition of exit visas would be the best means of encouraging more travel by Soviet citizens.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part Her Majesty's Government are playing in international efforts to bring about a closer understanding between the 50 million Ukrainians in the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We play a leading part in efforts within the conference on security and co-operation in Europe to bring about better understanding between the peoples of the Soviet Union, including the Ukrainians, and those of the United Kingdom. A meeting is currently taking place in Berne on human contacts.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest response by the Soviet Union in the implementation of human rights provision in the Helsinki agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) on 4 March at column 89. There has been no discernible improvement in the human rights situation in the Soviet Union recently. We shall continue to raise with the Soviet authorities on every suitable occasion their shortcomings in implementing the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens are at present employed in the Ukraine in the construction industry, education, the medical field, agriculture and technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's embassy in Moscow is in touch with the one British subject, an engineer, known to be in western Ukraine. The embassy knows of a party of 25 students who were due to leave Yalta on 10 May for Moscow and of a British teacher in Kharkov. Neither Yalta nor Kharkov have been the subject of advisory warnings of areas not to be visited.

Soviet Nuclear Accident

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will discuss the implications of the nuclear explosion at Chernobyl in the Ukraine with representatives of the Soviet Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have been in regular touch with the Soviet authorities both in London and Moscow since the explosion at Chernobyl. Most recently I spoke to the minister-counsellor at the Soviet embassy on Friday 9 May.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports have been received from Her Majesty's ambassador in Moscow as to how many people have been seriously affected by the recent nuclear explosion *(a)* in Chernobyl, *(b)* in Kiev, *(c)* in the Ukraine in general, *(d)* in Minsk and *(e)* in Biyelorussia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's ambassador in Moscow is hampered by the absence of official Soviet statistics about the number of people seriously affected in the areas mentioned. It is therefore impossible to make an accurate statement. In view of the uncertainty, we are currently advising British citizens etc not to travel to Kiev and western Ukraine, Minsk and Biyelorussia, Lithuania and north-eastern Poland unless absolutely necessary.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest reports received from Her Majesty's ambassador in Moscow about the causes and nature of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor catastrophe.

Mr. Eggar: We are receiving regular reports from Her Majesty's embassy in Moscow about the disaster at Chernobyl. The embassy is however not able to obtain a complete picture, given the absence of an official authoritative and detailed Soviet explanation of the causes and nature of the disaster.

Kiev (British Consul)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take immediate steps to facilitate the establishment of a British consul in Kiev; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. There are no plans to open a British consulate in Kiev. The interests of British subjects who reside in or visit the Ukraine are covered by the consular services of Her Majesty's embassy, Moscow.

Human Rights

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to establish an international conference to deal exclusively with human rights, and in particular the subject of the re-unification of families; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Family reunification is currently being discussed at Berne at the conference on security and co-operation in Europe expert meeting on human contacts. There will be a further opportunity to press for progress over divided families, and human rights, at the CSCE follow-up meeting which convenes in Vienna in November. The Government will ensure that due regard is paid at Vienna to the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and Madrid concluding document.

Luxembourg Compromise

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide details of the four occasions on which Her Majesty's Government have invoked the Luxembourg compromise at meetings of EEC Councils of Ministers; if he will further state dates on which the Ministers concerned advised the Presidents of the Councils in question that the Luxembourg compromise was being invoked; and what was the outcome of the use of the procedure in each case.

Mrs. Chalker: There have been two occasions on which the United Kingdom has utilised the machinery of the Luxembourg compromise; and a number of other occasions when the machinery has been used, but not at our instigation:

On 25 July 1978, the United Kingdom asked for a vote to be deferred in the Fisheries Council because Commission proposals for the conclusion of fisheries agreements with Sweden and the Faroes affected our "fundamental national interests". No vote was held.

On 18 May 1982 at the Agriculture Council, the United Kingdom representative asked for a vote on the annual price-fixing to be deferred because the United Kingdom had been unable to secure satisfactory decisions on the overall Community budget. We were not supported on that occasion by enough member states to defer a decision because others took the view that the compromise could only be invoked in support of a national, interest directly related to the subject under discussion.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of occasions on which the Luxembourg compromise has been formally invoked by each member state of the EEC, respectively, since 1973; and if he will publish a table showing the dates on which the procedure has been formally notified to the President of the respective Council of Ministers by the nations concerned.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir Russell Johnston) on 5 February at column 178.

European Union

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why he agreed on behalf of Her Majesty's Government to a formal commitment to European union in the Single European Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: European union is mentioned only in the preamble to the Single European Act. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agreed to the text since it recalls

the commitment which member states entered into in the Stuttgart declaration of 19 June 1983. The declaration stated:

"European Union is being achieved by deepening and broadening the scope of European activities so that they coherently cover, albeit on a variety of legal bases, a growing proportion of member states' mutual relations and of their external relations".

Golden Temple, Amritsar

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the recent disturbances at the Golden Temple in Amritsar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Five Sikhs, who had led an occupation of the Golden Temple since January, declared the "independence" of "Khalistan" on 29 April. Their occupation was terminated by the Punjab police and Indian paramilitary forces on 30 April. Casualties and damage are reported to have been minimal.

Transport Links, Hong Kong

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek the extension of the study of new transport links between Tsuen Wan and Tuen Mun, Tsuen Wan and Yuen Long, Tai Po and Yuen Long, and Sheung Shui and Yuen Long to include consideration of those links being built as extensions of the Kowloon-Canton railway system or the mass transit railway system as well as the proposed light rail transit system, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The transport study in question, which is being undertaken by the Kowloon-Canton railway corporation, will study only light rail transit extensions. However, if the patronage forecasts indicate that a heavy rail extension may be more suitable, the corporation will not ignore that conclusion. At the same time, the mass transit railway corporation is also studying the alternative of a mass transit railway extension from Tsuen Wan to Yuen Long.

These matters are totally within the competence of the Hong Kong Government, which will in due course evaluate all options before making a decision.

WEU (Terrorism)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what role he envisages for the Western European Union in the fight against terrorism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: At Venice on 29-30 April, Foreign and Defence Ministers of the Western European Union underlined the need to implement the measures agreed upon by the countries of Western Europe to combat terrorism. This action is being co-ordinated amongst the Twelve. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) on 8 May, this forum includes all WEU member states and ensures the widest possible co-ordination of the European response to terrorism.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response the Government have made to the latest Union of Soviet Socialist Republic's proposals with regard to on site inspection of the destruction of chemical weapons plants in the event of a chemical weapons ban.

Mr. Renton: We hope that recent Soviet comments on verification may represent a small though useful step. But the Soviet Union remains silent on the details of other crucial verification issues, such as the non-production of chemical weapons in the civil chemical industry and inspection on challenge. We will be addressing these and other issues with the Soviet Union when the negotiations for a verifiable global ban on chemical weapons at the conference on disarmament resume on 10 June.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the production of chemical weapons, or chemical weapon components, by British firms.

Mr. Renton: We attach a high priority to the agreement of a global and verifiable ban on all chemical weapons, which we believe will need to include controls on the manufacture of certain chemicals in civil industry. The United Kingdom abandoned its chemical warfare capability in the 1950s. Following the use of chemical weapons in the Gulf conflict, controls have been imposed on the export of certain civil chemicals which could be used in the manufacture of lethal chemical agents.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Kidnap Insurance

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Lord Privy Seal, pursuant to the answer of 1 May, *Official Report* column 1107, concerning kidnap insurance, if he will now make a statement on his investigation into this matter.

Mr. Biffen: The incident referred to was a matter for the Irish authorities to deal with. I do, however, understand the hon. Member's general concern about kidnap ransom insurance and the possibility that terrorists may gain funds from the payment of extortion demands. These issues are being carefully considered by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost of transporting nuclear waste to each of the four proposed nuclear waste sites.

Mr. Waldegrave: The overall cost of land transport of low level radioactive waste to any of the proposed disposal sites would be about £30 million (1985 values) over the period to 2030. Further details are given in "Assessment of Best Practicable Environtal Options for Management of Low and Intermediate Level Solid Radioactive Wastes", HMSO, March 1986.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to require local authorities within whose areas nuclear dumps may be located, to monitor radiation levels at the site.

Mr. Waldegrave: This is not necessary. Disposal of radioactive waste at a NIREX site will be subject to authorisation under the provisions of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. The authorisation will provide for adequate environmental monitoring by the site operator. Monitoring will also be carried out by Her Majesty's Radiochemical Inspectorate and inspectors from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has any proposals for the improvement of procedures in communication between the Radiochemical Inspectorate and the local authority at which a nuclear dump may be sited; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to require consultations between the Radiochemical Inspectorate and the technical officer of a local authority where nuclear waste is to be deposited; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have no plans to introduce such legislation. Her Majesty's Radiochemical Inspectorate will liaise with local authorities as necessary.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department monitors current safety standards for the disposal of nuclear waste at Drigg.

Mr. Waldegrave: Disposals of radioactive waste at the Drigg site operated by British Nuclear Fuels plc are subject to controls under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. The certificates of authorisation issued under the Act contain limitations and conditions designed to ensure that the effects of disposal are regulated in accordance with the internationally recommended standards of radiological safety. Officers of the Radiochemical Inspectorate in my Department visit the premises where radioactive waste is produced to check that conditions of authorisation are being complied with. Regular inspections of the Drigg disposal site are also made. Leachate from trenches is collected and monitored during discharge and check samples are taken with particular reference to the levels of activity in the site stream.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much nuclear low level waste and intermediate level waste is generated in the United Kingdom as a result of reprocessing spent oxide fuel from Japan and West Germany.

Mr. Waldegrave: No Japanese fuel has been reprocessed in the United Kingdom to date. Some German oxide fuel was reprocessed in the early 1970s. This produced 11 cubic metres of intermediate-level waste and 200 cu m of low level waste.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much spent oxide fuel originally from Japan has been returned to Japan without having been reprocessed in the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave: No irradiated oxide fuel has been returned to Japan since 1979.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tonnes of spent oxide fuel have been reprocessed and returned to West Germany; how much consequent low level waste has been dumped in the United Kingdom from 1979 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No West German oxide fuel has been reprocessed, or returned to West Germany since 1979 and therefore no low level waste has arisen from this source.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that no imported nuclear waste, whether low level or intermediate, will be dumped in any new disposal sites.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no plans to import nuclear waste.

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretry of State for the Environment what is the total volume of radioactive nuclear waste, differentiating between low level waste, intermediate level waste, and high level waste arising from different sources, namely: reprocessing, power stations, research, medical and industrial sources up to the year 2030 showing the amount from each of the above sources and the extent to which any of low level waste could be categorised as very low level waste.

Mrs. Rumbold: The numbers of cubic metres of conditioned radioactive waste expected to arise from these sources up to 2030 are as follows:

Source	*HLW*	*ILW*	*LLW*
Reactors (committed and proposed)	—	52,000	116,000 *350,000 to
Reprocessing	8,300	87,000	1,200,000
Research/Medical/ Industrial	—	35,000	75,000

* Depending on the degree of compaction.

Further details are given in research report number DOE/ RW/85-124.

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what volume of radioactive waste, either low level waste or intermediate level waste, could be reduced in volume either by compaction or incineration and to what extent, stating how far such compaction or incineration could cause such low level waste to be recategorised as intermediate level waste.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am advised that it is possible to reduce the volume of low level waste by at least a factor of three by compaction or incineration. Possibilities for further reduction are being investigated. It is unlikely that incineration could make it possible to recategorise any low level waste as intermediate level waste. Compaction leads to no change in categorisation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make it his policy to reply to Mrs. J. Bourne of 25 Edge avenue, Grimsby, about the South Killingholme potential nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for her to have a reasonable opportunity to reply before the special development order is laid; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to reply to Councillor N. Perkins of Oakhurst, 66 Station road, Great Coates, Great Grimsby, about the South Killingholme potential nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for him to have a reasonable opportunity to reply before the special development order is laid; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each application for additional housing investment programme resources in 1986-87, submitted by local authorities to his Department's urban housing renewal unit *(a)* the name of the local authority submitting the application, *(b)* the name and location of the proposed scheme, *(c)* whether changes in housing management involved as an integral part of the scheme include (i) decentralised management, or (ii) delegation of management, or (iii) involvement of tenants in other ways, or (iv) other changes, giving details of how tenants are to be involved in other ways or of other changes proposed, *(d)* the number of new dwellings to be provided, *(e)* the cost of work to existing dwellings, *(f)* the cost of work to the environment, *(g)* the average cost of work per dwelling, *(h)* the market value of the improved properties (total of existing plus new), *(i)* how many private developers have been approached to participate in the proposed scheme and what results have arisen from these approaches, *(j)* the stage reached and forecast timetable for (i) committee for the outline scheme, (ii) tenant consultation, (iii) committee agreement to invite tenders, (iv) decision on tenders and (v) any other approval needed from his Department and *(k)* the amount of the estimated total cost of the scheme to be met by (i) housing investment programme resources, (ii) urban programme resources for housing related projects, (iii) urban programme resources for community refurbishment schemes, (iv) urban development grant, (v) other public sector funded programmes, (vi) private developer and (vii) housing association (housing association grant element of scheme).

Sir George Young: In addition to the local authorities and estates listed in my answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 3 March at column *34*, the following further applications have now been received:

Local authorities	*Housing estate*
Bradford	Holmewood
Camden	Regents Park Maiden Lane
Halton	Central Ditton
Haringey	Broadwater Farm Tiverton Whitehall Street
Kensington and Chelsea	Holmefield House
Knowsley	Tower Hill New Hutte Hillside
Langbaurgh	Spencerbeck II Grangetown—access
Manchester	Miles Platting Hulme
Newham	Rathbone James Sinclair Point Dennison Point Clements Avenue
Nottingham	adford/Clifton Woodthorpe/Winchester Wyrale Drive Crabtree Farm Caunton Avenue Penn Avenue
Rochdale	Cloverhall
Salford	Barracks Ladywell
Sandwell	Galton Village Baldwin Street Price Street/Beechway George Ryder and Charles Spragg House Boulton Place/Murdoch Place Witeheath/Lion Farm Galton Village—estate office
Stockton	Clarences
Tower Hamlets	Bengal House Cubitt Town Barkantine Birchfield House St. Johns (South) St. Johns (North) St. John (North) Cedar/Oak houses Ocean Ocean—central heating Channel House Monteith Estate Lefevre Walk
Wakefield	Simpsons Lane
Wandsworth	Doddington Wandsworth Plain
Wigan	Norley Hall Millers Lane
Wirral	oreton

Full details of schemes which have already been approved in Bolton, Bradford, Calderdale, Coventry, Gateshead, Greenwich, Hull, Knowsley, Leeds, and Waltham Forest were given when I announced them to the House. Other schemes are currently being discussed and developed with the authorities concerned with consequent changes in many cases to the applications originally submitted. Details of the agreed schemes will be announced when the approvals are given.

Licensed Premises (Rating)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what basis licensed premises will be re-rated following the introduction of a national non-domestic rate; whether this review will be based on rental or barrellage; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: From the 1990 revaluation onwards, the basis of value for licensed premises, in common with other commercial property, will be net annual value. As their rental value is influenced by their potential trade, it will be necessary for valuation officers to consider both this and any actual rental evidence when preparing their assessments.

Council Dwellings

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the total number of council dwellings coming into management, including newly built, acquired, modernised or converted dwellings, for each of the standard regions and for England in the years 1983-84 and 1984-85, with an estimate for 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Sir George Young: The aggregates of figures supplied by local authorities in their 1984 and 1985 housing investment programme returns are as follows. The authorities are not asked to submit forward estimates, nor are any estimates made by my Department.

Dwellings coming into local authority management

Region	*April 1983 to March 1984*	*April 1984 to March 1985*
North	3,754	4,334
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,273	4,313
East Midlands	3,787	3,279
East Anglia	1,440	1,794
South East: Greater London	7,801	6,629
Rest	8,164	8,885
South-West	3,467	3,540
West Midlands	3,359	3,535
North-West	5,408	5,063
England	41,453	41,372

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the value of the Exchequer subsidies and rate fund contributions, respectively, to English local authority housing revenue account dwellings in total and on a per dwelling basis for the years 1978-79 to 1985-86 with an estimate for 1986-87.

Sir George Young: The information is in the following table. The figures for 1980-81 and earlier years are affected by minor differences of definition.

Housing subsidy and rate fund contributions 1978-79 to 1986-87

Year	*Housing Subsidy*	*Housing Subsidy per Dwelling* £		*RFC‡*	*RFC per Dwelling‖*
	£ million	*	†	*£ million*	£
1978-79	1,258	255	255	294	60
1979-80	1,274	257	257	321	89
1980-81	1,393	281	281	433	119
1981-82	884	185	180	420	114
1982-83	441	209	92	434	128
1983-84	350	231	75	497	149
1984-85	379	282	84	458	143
¶1985-86	457	345	105	523	167
¶1986-87	477	—	—	—	—

Sources:
1978-79 to 1980-81, CIPFA Housing Revenue Accounts Statistics
1981-82 to 1985-86, Second Advance Subsidy Claim Forms
1986-87, First Advance Subsidy Claim Forms

* Total amount of subsidy claimed, divided by the total housing stock of authorities claiming subsidy.

† Total amount of subsidy claimed, divided by the total stock of all local housing authorities.

‡ Sum of positive rate fund contributions.

‖ Sum of positive rate fund contributions, divided by the total housing stock of authorities making positive rate fund contributions.

¶ Estimated.

Repair and Special Grants

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of repair and special grants to private landlords in the years 1979 to 1985 which were mandatory grants.

Sir George Young: The available data for England are as follows:

	Special grants	*Repairs grants*		
	Mandatory to private landlords and HAs	*To private landlords and HAs*	*All grants*	*Mandatory grants*
	Number of houses		*Number of dwellings*	
1981*	280	610	4,889	450
1982	1,000	3,140	28,696	1,780
1983	1,100	9,310	113,065	4,200
1984	1,600	13,200	116,146	5,760
1985†	1,750	10,440	55,479	6,390

Mandatory special and repairs grants were introduced by the Housing Act 1980.

* April to December.

† Provisional.

Housing Association Dwellings

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the total number of housing association dwellings completed, including newly built and rehabilitated dwellings, for letting on a fair rent for each of the regions and for England as a whole in the years 1976-77 to 1985-86, and giving an estimate for 1986-87.

Sir George Young: The available information covers all dwellings newly built or rehabilitated for housing associations and is as follows. It is not the practice for make forecasts for future years.

*Renovations of dwellings owned by housing associations**

Number of dwellings

	North	Yorkshire & Humberside	East Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	Rest of South East	South West	West Midlands	North West	England
1976-77	260	182	930	3	12,276	91	421	1,248	3,264	18,675
1977-78	681	936	375	149	8,843	49	360	1,338	3,994	16,725
1978-79	929	512	609	84	7,386	502	437	1,653	2,047	14,159
1979-80	2,429	1,606	973	46	5,554	959	370	1,683	2,052	15,672
1980-81	1,782	828	886	82	4,095	362	641	2,161	3,596	14,433
1981-82	1,624	953	699	156	3,245	317	458	1,411	3,245	12,108
1982-83	1,917	1,251	986	300	4,096	482	585	1,568	4,912	16,097
1983-84	1,746	1,262	983	141	5,686	845	457	2,120	2,860	16,100
1984-85	1,133	1,006	1,126	95	5,692	973	735	1,770	3,302	†15,894
1985-86‡	851	663	471	49	2,572	474	252	910	2,020	8,262

* Dwellings in work approved up to 1977 and in work completed from 1978. Including improvement for sale from 1981. Including hostel bedspaces provided up to 1984.
† Regional location of 62 dwellings in England total was not reported.
‡ First three quarters (provisional).

*New Dwellings completed for housing associations**

Number of dwellings

	North	Yorkshire & Humberside	East Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	Rest of South East	South West	West Midlands	North West	England
1976-77	1,826	1,356	1,413	523	2,205	2,601	1,427	2,160	1,719	15,230
1977-78	1,823	2,505	2,345	1,172	2,509	6,285	2,420	2,473	3,241	24,773
1978-79	1,388	1,841	2,296	531	1,521	3,944	2,022	2,907	3,438	19,888
1979-80	1,000	1,517	1,191	990	1,780	3,549	1,532	2,647	2,532	16,738
1980-81	1,017	2,106	1,161	1,228	2,186	4,502	1,141	3,384	3,037	19,762
1981-82	1,316	1,093	1,815	978	2,034	2,156	1,091	1,783	2,649	14,915
1982-83	622	1,355	1,069	496	1,693	1,700	652	1,309	1,513	10,409
1983-84	1,482	1,012	1,466	480	1,455	2,063	946	1,996	3,318	14,218
1984-85	1,268	972	1,215	656	1,267	1,871	907	1,807	2,995	12,958
1985-86*	1,055	1,186	675	386	1,006	1,563	683	1,274	2,150	9,978

* (provisional).
Note: Hostels not included.

Rent Rebates

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the total cost of rent rebate and rent allowance payments, the total number of recipients of rent rebates and rent allowance and the average rebate/allowance per recipient, respectively, in the United Kingdom, in England and in Greater London in each year from 1978-79 to 1985-86 and giving an estimate for 1986-87.

Sir George Young: Information on costs and numbers of recipients in Great Britain from 1980-81, including estimates for 1986-87, is contained in the public expenditure White Paper Cmnd. 9702. II tables 3.15 and 3.15.6; similar information for Northern Ireland is also available in tables 3.18.42 and 3.18.43. Corresponding figures for 1978-79 and 1979-80 are in Cmnd. 9143. Estimates of costs, recipients and average payments in England and in London and of average payments in Great Britain are as follows:

Total Expenditure on Rent Rebate and Allowance Schemes London and England

£ million

	London		England	
	Rebates £ million	Allowances £ million	Rebates £ million	Allowances £ million
1978-79	30	10	160	40
1979-80	35	10	180	40
1980-81	45	10	240	50
1981-82	70	15	400	60
1982-83	115	15	770	70
1983-84	300	120	1,660	490
1984-85	330	150	1,790	600
1985-86	340	165	1,890	690
1986-87	350	180	1,950	700

Notes:
Total expenditure includes discretionary payments but excludes administration costs.
Estimates for 1982-83 include "partial start" certificated rebate recipients from November 1982.
Estimates for 1986-87 are provisional, based on advance subsidy claim forms, and are rounded to the nearest £50 million (£10 million in London).
Source:
Department of the Environment subsidy claim forms for years up to 1982-83; DHSS for later years.

Average Payments to Recipients of Rent Rebates and allowances Great Britain

	Rent Rebates £ p.w.	Rent Allowances £ p.w.
1978-79	3.30	3.40
1979-80	3.70	3.60
1980-81	4.60	3.80
1981-82	6.00	5.00
1982-83	5.90	5.20

	Rent Rebates £ p.w.	Rent Allowances £ p.w.
1983-84	9.90	10.20
1984-85	10.90	11.40
1985-86	11.50	12.80
1986-87	11.90	13.00

Source:
Estimates of scheme costs and average numbers of recipients from Public Expenditure White Papers. Cmnd. 9702 and 9143.

Total numbers of recipients, and average weekly payments, of Rent Rebates and Allowances London and England

	London Recipients of		London Average payments		England Recipients of		England Average payments	
	Rebates 000's	Allowances 000's	Rebates £ pw	Allowances £ pw	Rebates 000's	Allowances 000's	Rebates £ pw	Allowances £ pw
April 1978	140	50	4·00	3·70	930	200	3·40	3·20
April 1979	140	50	4·50	4·10	920	200	3·60	3·50
May 1980	140	50	5·20	4·60	960	210	4·40	4·00
May 1981	160	50	7·20	5·20	1,150	210	6·20	4·60
May 1982	180	50	8·30	5·70	1,260	230	7·20	5·30
May 1983	400	140	12·40	11·00	2,820	680	10·70	10·20
May 1984	480	200	13·20	13·70	2,940	860	11·40	12·00
May 1985	460	200	13·90	15·40	2,900	900	12·30	13·20
May 1986	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Source: Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy/Department of the Environment Annual Housing Rents and Benefits returns.
* Estimates not available.

Crown Suppliers (Stores)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total value of goods held in the Crown Suppliers stores at the India pavilion, Exhibition Ground, Wembley and at Milton, near Abingdon, Oxfordshire.

Sir George Young: At 30 April 1986 items worth approximately £1·55 million were held at Wembley, and at Milton approximately £6·2 million. In addition, the Crown Suppliers hold on an agency basis approximately £4·5 million worth of hearing aid equipment owned by regional health authorities and part of a DHSS stockpile of bedding and domestic items for use in emergencies.

Nuclear-free Zones

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the councils which have declared themselves to be nuclear-free zones.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department has no detailed information about local authorities' nuclear-free zone activities. My right hon. Friend has, however, received a number of representations about the way some authorities have used their discretionary spending powers to finance and publicise such activities. This is a matter we drew specifically to the attention of the Widdicombe inquiry.

Structure Plan (Bedfordshire)

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decisions on the inquiry into Bedfordshire county council's structure plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has today placed on deposit for public comment modifications he proposes to make to the Bedfordshire structure plan alterations, together with the report of the panel which conducted an examination in public into selected matters raised by the alterations. I have written to my hon. Friend enclosing a copy of the report and the modifications.

Property Services Agency, Glasgow

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the Government properties at present managed and maintained by the Property Services Agency from its area office in Glasgow.

Sir George Young: Approximately 730 properties are managed and maintained by the PSA's Glasgow area office, whose territory stretches from Dumfriesshire to the Outer Hebrides. I shall write to the right hon. Lady giving a complete list.

Radioactivity

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, further to his answer of 6 May, *Official Report*, column 62, he will publish the location of the three additional stations for the measurement of radioactivity in rain-water referred to.

Mrs. Rumbold: Aldergrove, Antrim, Snowdon, Gwynedd and Orfordness, Suffolk.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the measured levels of radiation for the isotopes of plutonium, americium, neptunium and strontium for each monitoring site for the period 25 April to the present time; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Data published by the National Radiological Protection Board indicate that none of these elements has been detected.

Water

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what audit control exists to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of water authorities.

Mr. John Patten: Water authorities report to me, in their audited annual accounts, performance against three controls set by Government. These are (i) the financial target specified in the annual Water Authorities (Return on Assets) Order; (ii) a target performance aim for operating costs, excluding depreciation; (iii) their external financing limit. In addition, auditors undertake value-for-money studies as a routine part of their work.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the comparative average charges to non-metered consumers in each water authority area.

Mr. John Patten: My officials receive from each regional water authority a detailed return of their charges for water supply, sewerage and environmental services. Returns for 1986-87 indicate that average household bills for water, sewerage and environmental services are as follows:

	£
Anglian	116·69
Northumbrian	84·34
North West	85·19
Severn Trent	83·55
Southern	99·58
South-West	110·90
Thames	83·09
Wessex	107·09
Yorkshire	90·96

Anglian Water Authority

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *239*, what are the problems about which he is in correspondence with the Anglian water authority on the subject of the Middle Level Transfer Order 1985; how soon he expects to resolve them; and if he will make a statement on the position of those farmers who contributed to the capital cost of providing the irrigation water they now are using under the terms of this order, pending its confirmation or extension.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his answer*, 6 May 1986, c. *167*.]: It has come to light that certain provisions of the order may require negative resolution procedure in that they appear to amend an earlier enactment. My officials are exploring urgently with officers of the authority what options are available for achieving an early decision on the scheme. While the Department will do everything it can to this end, the position of the farmers with an interest in the scheme is a matter between them and the water authority.

Nuclear Dumps

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *321*, whether the reprocessing wastes referred to include materials contaminated in the course of reprocessing but which do not originate as waste for reprocessing.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 9 May 1986, c. *307*]: Yes.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *321*, what effect his decision to limit the disposal of nuclear waste at NIREX sites to low level waste will have on the future disposal of reprocessing wastes at NIREX sites.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 9 May 1986, c. *307*]: None, unless the possibility mentioned in my answer of 28 April to the hon. Member arises.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters and petition signatures for and against the siting of a nuclear waste dump he has received in the month of April from each of the four areas short-listed by NIREX.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 9 May 1986, c. *307*]: In April my right hon. Friend received the following approximate numbers of letters against the siting of a radioactive waste disposal facility at each of the four areas short-listed by NIREX: South Killingholme, 220; Fulbeck, 185; Bradwell, 25; Elstow, 20. A number of postcards were also received. In addition, some 50 letters were received on the subject of radioactive waste management generally. Only two letters were received in favour of NIREX investigating the suitability of a particular site: one each from South Killingholme and Bradwell. I will write to the hon. Member concerning the number of petition signatures received.

Mr. Austim Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in view of the changed plans for dumping of nuclear waste, he will defer the date of laying of the special development order.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 8 May 1986, c. *237*]: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he is satisfied with the adequacy of the consultation procedures and the levels of information available to the public regarding the disposal of nuclear waste and the creation of new dumping sites; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether, in view of the decision to dispose of only low level nuclear waste at one of the four sites, he now intends to publish new information to local authorities about quantities, transportation, method of dumping, safety, risk and other characteristics of nuclear waste dumps.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 9 May 1986, c. *237*]: In 1983-84 my Department consulted widely over the principles to be used in assessing proposals from NIREX. More recently we have consulted on the terms of the special development order which will enable NIREX to undertake geological investigations. We will continue to ensure that adequate information is made available. I understand that NIREX will be revising its public information in the light of the recent decision.

London Boroughs (Sheltered Dwellings)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sheltered dwellings are maintained by each of the London boroughs; and what percentage that represents of total local authority stock.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his answer*, 9 May 1986, c. *298*]: The numbers of sheltered dwellings at 1 April 1985 as recorded in the authorities' housing

investment programme returns, which are in the Library, and the proportions of each authority's housing stock are as follows:

Local Authorities' Sheltered Dwellings, London: April 1985

	Number	*Percentage of authority's dwelling stock*
Greater London Council	41	0·09
City of London	0	0·00
Barking & Dagenham	496	1·50
Barnet	192	1·07
Bexley	719	6·38
Brent	648	3·00
Bromley	497	2·93
Camden	1,296	3·82
Croydon	1,110	5·49
Ealing	971	4·78
Enfield	917	4·60
Greenwich	901	2·43
Hackney	1,033	2·26
Hammersmith and Fulham	979	5·17
Haringey	1,067	4·41
Harrow	519	6·03
Havering	1,025	6·10
Hillingdon	636	3·36
Hounslow	995	4·88
Islington	579	1·41
Kensington and Chelsea	225	2·53
Kingston upon Thames	1,211	18·16
Lambeth	953	1·95
Lewisham	628	1·49
Merton	233	1·78
Newham	287	0·92
Redbridge	1,072	9·45
Richmond upon Thames	513	5·64
Southwark	697	1·12
Sutton	736	6·12
Tower Hamlets	433	2·32
Waltham Forest	524	2·54
Wandsworth	905	2·32
Westminster	588	2·54
	23,626	2·88

Voluntary Organisations (Funding)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is keeping any information on voluntary organisations which have lost their funding following abolition of the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his answer*, 9 May 1986, c. *300*]: Funding for individual voluntary groups is a matter for the boroughs, and information is not collected by my Department. My discussion with London boroughs and with bodies representing London voluntary organisations indicate that funding in London is continuing at an adequate level.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current acreage of the London Docklands Development Corporation owned land by borough location.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his answer*, 9 May 1986, c. *301*]: Land in LDDC ownership on 31 March 1986, excluding water areas, was as follows:

London borough of Newham—711 acres
London borough of Southwark —233 acres
London borough of Tower Hamlets—256 acres

Parking Fines (Departmental Funds)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many fixed penalty parking fines were paid out of departmental funds in 1985.

Mr Kenneth Baker [*pursuant to his answer*, 9 May 1986, c. *300*]: During 1985 a total of 429 parking fines were paid on behalf of all Government Departments.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now publish the results of the efficiency scrutiny carried out by his Department into the planning appeals system, including the action plan setting out the objectives for reducing median times for handling appeals.

Mr. Kenneth Baker [*pursuant to the reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *64*]: I have approved the publication of the report of an efficiency scrutiny into the handling of written representations planning appeals and the Department's action plan setting out detailed proposals to improve processing times. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House and will be sent to each local authority.

The report identifies a potential reduction in median handling times from the present 19 weeks to 11 weeks by the end of 1988.

Time savings will flow from measures:

1. to change the initial procedure so that work on the local authority input can be started up to two weeks earlier; this has already been implemented;
2. to encourage improved communication between councils and appellants with clearer decision and grounds of appeal;
3. to set target timetable early in the appeal process; this will give appellants more certainty;
4. to increase personal responsibility within the inspectorate and substantially reduce checking. This will accelerate the issue of decision letters by up to two weeks. This has already been implemented;
5. to invest in information technology to speed up the production and issue of appeal decision letters.

The report makes clear that maximum acceleration will not be achieved without:

1. co-operation from the parties; the Department accepts the responsibility to ensure the parties are aware of the need to change current attitude and practices; to this end it will provide advice and guidances, but it will also provide necessary statutory provision to discipline the process;
2. adequate manpower, in particular extra inspectors, to cope with the surge of cases in the inspectorate which will result from accelerating the process.

The Government accept all the main recommendations of the report. Full details are in the action plan published with the efficiency scrutiny.

In the near future I will publish proposals to speed up the handling of inquiry appeals. However, it should be noted the measures outlined above will also be effective in reducing inquiry appeal processing times.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

CAP (Surplus Products)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his reply dated 21 April *Offical Report*, columns *39-40*, whether he will give a breakdown by product in each case for the years in question.

Mr. Gummer: The breakdown is as follows:

mecu

	1975	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Export refunds				
Cereals	330	918	1,077	2,230
Sugar	28	1,190	1,353	1,192
Milk and Milk Products	331	1,943	2,028	2,403
Beef	146	1,393	1,338	1,132
Public storage costs				
Cereals	64	292	528	756
Sugar	0	0	0	0
Milk and Milk Products	207	508	444	578
Beef	409	195	326	359

Note:

For sources see the reply of 21 April. The figure given for 1975 storage costs in that reply should have read 680 mecu and the footnote should have referred to the 1975 rather than the 1985 source.

Agricultural Production (Spain and Portugal)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the European Economic Commission has made an estimate of the amount by which production of the principal agricultural products is likely to increase in Spain and Portugal under the common agricultural prices at the current real price level.

Mr. Gummer: The Commission of the European Communities has not published such an estimate. Most Portuguese prices are above EC levels, as are a few Spanish prices. The 10-year transition period and far-reaching changes in marketing organisation are future factors which make such an estimate almost totally impossible.

Milk Quota

Mr. Baldry asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in calculating the tenants' fraction of the standard milk quota, the rental value of the barren land, defined as that rent attainable if there were no dairy buildings on site, will be excluded.

Mr. Gummer: No. The rent to be taken into account is the actual rent paid by the tenant in the quota base year. This rent relates to the land itself and any buildings or other facilities provided by the landlord.

EC Food (Exports)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the amounts of foodstuffs exported by the EEC to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and east Europe in 1985; and if he will provide details of the comparable export totals in each of the previous five years.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

North-east Salmon Fishery

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his present estimate of the total number of people in north-east England who are directly or indirectly employed in the north-east drift net salmon fishery; and if he can express the total in terms of man days per year.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Bees

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the changes in the numbers of Britain's bee population over the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to encourage the growth and development of the bee-keeping industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department encourages the development of bee-keeping by ensuring a healthy bee population through strict controls over the import of bees and through systematic inspection of bee colonies for American and European Foul Brood. Free advice and a free diagnosis service are provided by the ADAS national bee-keeping unit.

Mr. Teddy Tayor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from growers of oilseed rape about the impact of the decline in bee numbers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: We have not received any representations from growers of oilseed rape about the impact of any decline in bee numbers.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what positive contribution is made by the bee population to British agriculture and horticulture; and what importance he attaches to the preservation of the bee population.

Mrs. Fenner: The bee population makes a positive contribution to British agriculture and horticulture through the pollination of a wide range of crops. I believe this is an important contribution and my Department will continue to help beekeepers by promoting a healthy bee population.

Badgers

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the cost of the tuberculosis eradication scheme for badgers for each of the last 10 years.

Mrs. Fenner: The estimated operational costs of badger control in England and Wales for each of the ten

years 1975-76 to 1984-85 are shown in the table. An important contributory factor in the increase in costs since 1981-82 was the change from gassing to trapping as the principal method of control in June 1982.

	£'000
1975-76	90
1976-77	100
1977-78	110
1978-79	160
1979-80	210
1980-81	250
1981-82	370
1982-83	500
1983-84	650
1984-85	680

EC (Food Imports)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total volume of food imports to the EEC from East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, respectively, in the most recent annual period for which figures are available.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested for 1984 is as follows. Figures for 1985 are not yet available on a comparable basis.

Imports of food to European Community 1984*

	Thousand tonnes
East Germany	52
Poland	573
Czechoslovakia	197
Bulgaria	63
Romania	90
Hungary	495
USSR	61

* Defined as Section 0 of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) and includes live animals and animal feeds.
Source: Eurostat.

Radioactivity

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the take-up of radioactive contamination from rainwater into agricultural and horticultural crops.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department has been monitoring the levels of radioactivity in crops since 4 May. These take account of the uptake of radionuclides through all pathways including surface deposition by rainwater. The maximum levels so far found have only been a small percentage of the level above which any action would need to be considered for crops, but monitoring will continue for as long as necessary.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now advise people against the drinking of milk direct from farms in areas where high concentrations of radioactivity have been detected; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: Levels of radioactivity in milk are well below that at which any action would need to be considered. Latest results of milk sampling show that levels of iodine-131, which was initially the most significant radionuclide, are continuing to fall. Radiocaesium, which is longer-lived, is now becoming relatively more significant. This means that the most significant radionuclide is now radiocaesium but levels of this are also well below the action level and have now stabilised and are showing indications of falling.

Fish (Grading)

Mr. Marland asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to improve the grading of fish sold in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: Under the rules of the European Community fisheries policy, the main species of fish must be graded before they are first offered for sale. My right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Scotland propose to use their powers under section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972 to lay before Parliament later this year measures to back up the EC requirements in this field.

The Community has laid down standards of freshness and size to which all the main species of fish should be graded before they are offered for sale. Their aim is to improve the saleability of fish and the livelihoods of those who depend on it. Much of the running has so far been made by the fish producer organisations, although the Government are channelling nearly £8 million through the Sea Fish Industry Authority to improve marketing in general. Ministers have now decided that the time is right to take action to back up the Community rules with penalties for failure to observe them. We shall be laying the necessary regulations before Parliament later this year after consultation with interested parties.

Food Sales

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the total cost to the taxpayer for the half value of the 700 tonnes of beef which was shipped to Libya from Troon in Ayrshire on 19 April; and what further liabilities will be borne by the British taxpayer in planned future dispatches;

(2) why Her Majesty's Government paid half the cost of a shipment of 700 tonnes of beef dispatched from Troon, Scotland, on 19 April consigned to Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 April 1986, column *164*.]: There is no direct liability to the British taxpayer as export refunds are paid from Community funds, although of course these funds are provided in the end by member states. Export refunds are payable on Community beef exports to Libya at the rates which apply to destinations in North Africa and the near and middle east. These vary according to the cut involved and in mid-April ranged from around 20p per pound to around 75p per pound. It is likely that the refund in this case fell in the middle of that range.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will propose at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers that no further export rebates should be paid by the EEC in respect of exports of food to Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to cease the shipment of beef and other commodities from Scotland to Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 April 1986, c. *164*]: Exports of agricultural commodities take place under regulations designed to place Commodity exports in a position to compete with supplies at world prices, not to provide special benefits to the recipient countries. The Commission has in addition assured us that no further special refunds will be made available on exports of dairy products to Libya.

Production Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing how the United Kingdom production of agricultural products subject to the common agricultural policy price compares with 1970-71 production levels.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 April 1986, c. *248*]: The first block of figures below shows the 1970-71 and 1985 production of the main items subject to the common agricultural policy.

The second block gives, for comparison, similar data for some other items. (All figures are '000 tonnes except where otherwise specified.)

	1970-71	**1985*
Total Cereals†	13,255	22,137
Wheat	4,236	11,861
Barley	7,530	9,617
Oilseed Rape	8	891
Sugar‡	954	1,211
Field Peas	n.a.	233
Field Beans	n.a.	155
Apples	530	300
Pears	72	51
Cauliflowers	289	367
Tomatoes	110	124
Milk (million litres)‖	12,102	15,265
Beef and Veal	987	1,115
Mutton and Lamb	223	305
Eggs (million dozens)	1,257	1,031
Poultrymeat	579	875
Pigmeat	944	989
Potatoes	7,364	6,892
Total Top Fruit¶	674	379
Total Soft Fruit	103	109
Total Outdoor Vegetables●	3,151	3,293
Total Protected Vegetables■	215	344
Ornamental Crops (£ million)	51	246
Hops	12	7
Wool (million kg)	46	57

* Provisional.
† Includes wheat and barley.
‡ Sugar production from homegrown sugar beet. The 1970-71 figure is on a raw sugar basis, and the 1985 figure on a refined sugar basis.
‖ Sales through MMB schemes.
¶ Includes apples and pears.
● Includes cauliflowers.
■ Includes tomatoes.

Milk (Radioactivity)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was (i) the maximum level of radioactivity in the United Kingdom measured in milk in the period 30 April to the latest available date and the date and site of this measurement, (ii) the derived emergency reference level for radioactivity in milk used in the United Kingdom and (iii) the emergency reference level of radioactivity in milk recommended by the International Atomic Energy Agency; and if he will make a statement advising on contingency action in the event of radioactivity above safe levels in milk supplies.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 May 1986, column *267*]: (i) The highest levels found in milk in England and Wales were for iodine-131, which reached a maximum of 371 bq/litre on 4 May in one of the areas affected by the high rainfall on the night of Friday 2 May in the north of England. This was one isolated example. In the last few days, while iodine-131 has started to decay quite substantially, the level of caesium has risen to a maximum of 446 bq/litre; (ii) the derived emergency reference level for iodine-131 in milk is 2,000 bq/litre and 3,600 bq/litre for caesium-137; (iii) we are advised by the NRPB that it is not aware of an emergency reference level published by the International Atomic Energy Agency. NRPB action levels used by this Department have been derived from standards published by the International Committee on Radiological Protection. Powers under part I of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1984 would enable us to take immediately any appropriate action to control the sale of milk or other foodstuffs in the event of radioactivity being found above safe levels.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will compare the normal levels of radioactivity in milk with those measured on Wednesday 30 April, Thursday 1 May, Friday 2 May, Saturday 3 May, Sunday 4 May, Monday 5 May and Tuesday 6 May, respectively; if he will also compare these with the derived emergency reference level for radionuclides in milk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 May 1986, column *267*]: As soon as we heard of the accident at Chernobyl on Monday 28 April, daily sampling of milk was instituted but no effects were detected until Friday 2 May when traces of the predominant radionuclides iodine-131 and caesium-137 were detected for the first time. These are not normally present in milk in the United Kingdom. This triggered intensification of monitoring to give comprehensive national coverage of milk from creameries and individual farms. The majority of results for iodine-131 across the country have remained at around 10 to 50 bq/l and for caesium the majority have been less than 50. However, following heavy rain on Friday evening while the airstream carrying radioactivity from the Chernobyl power station was still over certain parts of the United Kingdom, the levels of milk taken from cows on open pasture on Saturday 3 May reached 350 bq/l for iodine-131 and 200 bq/l for caesium-137. The most radiologically significant nuclide was initially iodine-131, for which emergency reference level is 2,000 bq/l, but as this element declines quickly, caesium-137 is now being relatively significant.

Because of the uneven incidence throughout the country, it is not possible to give a single figure for the levels of radioactivity in milk on a daily basis from Wednesday 30 May until Tuesday 6 May but the highest level reached on any reading, which was from cows on open pasture, was on 4 May when it reached 371 bq/l for iodine-131.

Frozen Food

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 6 May to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, whether he has any proposals to compensate British frozen food manufacturers for the loss of markets in Spain resulting from the increased tariff on frozen vegetables in the treaty of accession of Spain.

Mrs. Fenner *[pursuant to her reply,* 9 May 1986, column *267]:* As I explained in that answer, it is difficult at this stage to make any precise assessments of the implications for our exporters' access to the Spanish market. We are actively seeking a reduction in the Spanish tariff on frozen peas and have no proposals to compensate British exporters affected by a Community problem.

Spanish Corn and Sorghum

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current percentage level of variable levy which is applicable to imports of corn and sorghum to Spain in consequence of the accession of Spain to the European Economic Community; and what was the level of levy applied before the treaty of accession was signed.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to his reply,* 8 May 1986, column *243]:* Third country imports of maize (corn) and sorghum to Spain are liable to Community import levies, adjusted by the accession compensatory amounts set out in regulation 576/86. Community import levies are specific amounts equivalent to the difference between world prices and EC threshold prices, and are calculated daily by the Commission. The average rate of levy, net of ACA on imports into Spain from 1 March to April were 140·92 ECU/tonne and 134·31 ECU/tonne for maize and sorghum, respectively. Before accession, imports of maize and sorghum to Spain were generally liable to a temporaliy reduced import duty of 0·9 per cent. of the CIF value and a home compensation tax of 8 per cent. levied on the CIF value increased by 1 per cent. In addition regulatory duties also applied; in the period immediately prior to accession these were 10,202 pesetas/tonne and 9,332 pesetas/tonne for maize and sorghum respectively.

SOCIAL SERVICES

North-West Regional Health Authority

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the scheduling arrangements for capital spending by the North-Western regional health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Health authorities are required to produce capital programmes which will best promote their strategic plans and which most effectively manage the considerable capital resources available. I understand that, in consultation with its district health authorities, this is what North-Western regional health authority is attempting to do.

Old Persons' Homes

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total annual sum paid each year since 1980 to claimants in respect of residence and maintenance in old persons' homes in Coventry.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not readily available and could be obtained only by a special exercise which would be disproportionately expensive.

Benefits (Burnley)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit and *(b)* unemployment benefit in the Burnley constituency; and what have been the comparative figures on an annual basis since 1979.

Mr. Major: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The Burnley constituency is covered by the Department's local office at Burnley for supplementary benefit purposes and by two unemployment benefit offices in Burnley and in Nelson for unemployment benefit purposes. The boundaries of these offices are not conterminous with those of the Burnley constituency.

The following figures show the total number of people claiming supplementary benefit from the Department's Burnley office at 11 February 1986, the latest available, and at comparable dates since 1979.

	Number
1979	10,483
1980	9,972
1981	11,586
1982	13,478
1983	15,561
1984	16,020
1985	16,504
1986	16,463

Source 100 per cent. coupt of live cases in action.

Figures of people receiving unemployment benefit from the unemployment benefit offices in November 1985, the latest available, and at comparable dates since 1979 are as follows:

	Number
November 1979	1,165
November 1980	2,951
February 1982*	4,542
November 1982	3,526
November 1983	2,896
November 1984†	—
November 1985	2,344

* Figures for November 1981 are not available due to industrial action. These figures relate to February 1982.

† Figures for November 1984 are not available due to Industrial action.

Note: People simultaneously in receipt of supplementary benefit and unemployment benefit are included in both sets of figures.

Hearing Therapists

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons there are with substantially impaired hearing in England; and how many hearing therapists are employed by each health authority in England.

Mr. Whitney: As at 31 March 1983, the latest date for which figures are available, the numbers of hearing impaired people registered with local authorities in England were 16,113 deaf with speech, 15,722 deaf without speech and 47,179 hard of hearing. It is known, however, that these figures are not representative of the true prevalence of hearing impairment in the population. The profession of hearing therapy has been developed in this country only since 1978-79 and we understand that at present about 51 hearing therapists are in post in England, spread through all 14 regions.

Heart Disease (Asians)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to respond to the report on coronary heart disease and Asians in Britain sent to him by the Coronary Prevention Group for the Confederation of Indian Organisations.

Mr. Whitney: This very recent report will be studied carefully before deciding what response is called for.

Wandsworth Health Authority

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current allocation of funds to the Wandsworth health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: In 1986-87 Wandsworth health authority will receive a total revenue cash limit of £90,657,000 and a total capital allocation of £997,000 (includes joint finance).

The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of South-West Thames regional health authority, which is responsible for allocating funds to its district health authorities, for any additional information.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present number of nurses' homes or flats within the Wandsworth health authority area.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Wandsworth health authority for this information.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings in expenditure on housing benefit he expects to make in 1986-87 and 1987-88 as a result of his proposal to increase the main housing benefit needs allowance in July 1986 by the same cash amounts as the retirement pension rather than according to the normal uprating formula.

Mr. Major: No comparison is available since the traditional uprating formula, which has sometimes produced reductions in entitlement in the past, could not be used on this occasion because the measurement period for the transitional July uprating covered only May 1985 to January 1986.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate *(a)* the number of awards of the supplementary benefit non-householder housing addition to those aged 21 to 24 years, *(b)* the number of households receiving housing benefit containing non-dependents between the ages of 21 and 24 years, in respect of whom deductions from housing benefit are made and *(c)* the net annual saving in benefit expenditure he expects to make as a result of the proposed changes to the rules governing non-householders and non-dependants aged between 21 and 24 years in July 1986;

(2) what is his latest estimate of the proportion of *(a)* pensioner households, *(b)* households with dependent children and *(c)* other households who are taking up their entitlement to standard rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates under the housing benefit scheme.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of total expenditure on housing benefit payments for each financial year beginning in 1982-83 to the present, showing *(a)* the division between standard and certificated housing benefit, *(b)* the division between rate rebates, rent rebates and rent allowances and *(c)* the cost of housing benefit supplement.

Mr. Major: The information is given in the tables.

Table 1: Housing benefit expenditure—Great Britain

£ million

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Rent rebates				
Standard	—	710	720	760
Certificated	330	1,280	1,430	1,530
Total	330	1,980	2,150	2,290
Rent allowances				
Standard	—	160	210	250
Certificated	—	380	460	530
Total	—	540	670	780
Rate rebates				
Standard	—	520	560	600
Certificated	120	700	820	920
Total	120	1,220	1,380	1,520
All housing benefit				
Standard	—	1,390	1,490	1,610
Certificated	450	2,350	2,710	2,980
Total	450	3,740	4,210	4,590

Table 2: Housing benefit supplement expenditure—Great Britain

£ million

1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
—	30	30	50

Notes:

1. Figures for 1985-86 are estimates and are subject to revision, as are earlier years in cases where individual authorities' claims have still to be finalised.
2. All figures are rounded to the nearest £10 million; consequently some totals may not be equal to the sum of their component parts.
3. Figures for 1982-83 reflect that housing benefit was only introduced for some from November 1982. Housing benefit for all was introduced from April 1983.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the increase in expenditure if the housing benefit rent and rate tapers, mentioned in the social security White Paper (Cmnd. 9691), were instead set at *(a)* 37 per cent. on rent and 20 per cent. on rates and *(b)* 28 per cent. on rent and 10 per cent. on rates.

Mr. Newton: We estimate that the increase in expenditure would be of the order of *(a)* £300 million and *(b)* £725 million.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the housing benefit paid to *(a)* a single pensioner under 79 years, *(b)* a single pensioner over 80 years, *(c)* a pensioner couple under 79 years, *(d)* a pensioner couple over 80 years, *(e)* a single parent, working, with one child under 16 years, *(f)* a couple, one working, with one child under 16 years, *(g)* a single parent, working, with two children under 16 years and *(h)* a couple, one working, with two children under 16 years where the rent and rates are (i) 25 per cent. below average, (ii) average and (iii) 25 per cent. above average and gross weekly income is *(x)* at the level of unemployment benefit and *(y)* earnings of £45, £55, £65, £75, £85, £95, £110 and £125 a week, under the current provisions and under the assumptions set out in the technical annex to Cmnd. 9691, including the 20 per cent. contribution to rates; and in each case at what level of income the entitlement to housing benefit would disappear.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest estimates of the number of households receiving housing benefit in Great Britain, showing *(a)* the division between standard and certificated cases, *(b)* the division between home owners, council tenants and others, *(c)* the division between pensioner households, families with children and others, *(d)* the number receiving rent rebates or allowances only, *(e)* the number receiving both a rent rebate or allowance and a rate rebate and *(f)* the number receiving a rate rebate only.

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest

estimates of the number of households receiving housing benefit in Great Britain, showing *(a)* the division between standard and certificated cases, *(b)* the division between home owners, council tenants and others, *(c)* the division between pensioner households, families with children and others, *(d)* the number receiving rent and rebates or allowances only, *(e)* the number receiving both a rent rebate or allowance and a rate rebate and *(f)* the number receiving a rate rebate only.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 March 1986, c. *528-29*]: I regret that there were a number of minor errors in the table in my reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). The corrected information is as follows.

The latest available estimates, based on inquiry information which relates to the autumn of 1984, are given in the following table. Estimates for later dates are currently available only on the basis of a computer simulation model using family expenditure survey data.

Housing Benefit: Autumn 1984

Great Britain, thousands.

	*Standard Housing Benefit**	*Certificated Housing Benefit†*	*All Housing Benefit*
All Households	3,990	3,210	7,200
Home owners	1,580	690	2,270
Council tenants	1,850	1,970	3,820
Others	560	550	1,110
Pensioners	2,680	1,460	4,140
Families with children	760	920	1,680
Others	540	830	1,370
Rent rebate/allowance and rate rebate	1,900	2,400	4,300
Rent rebate/allowance only	300	100	400
Rate rebate only	1,800	700	2,500

* Estimates of standard housing benefit recipients are mainly derived from the DHSS September 1984 standard inquiry of local authorities supplemented by estimates at the same date made by a computer simulation model of housing benefit entitlement.

† Estimates of certificated housing benefit recipients are derived from the August 1984 supplementary benefit quarterly inquiry. These estimates relate to those certificated to receive housing benefit. A very small proportion may not actually receive housing benefit because of the effect of deductions for non-dependent members of the household but reliable information is not available to quantify this.

Notes:

Estimates of the numbers receiving rent and rate help, rent help only and rate help only are subject to a greater degree of error and are therefore rounded to the nearest 100,000. The remaining estimates are rounded to the nearest 10,000.

The individual figures given may not sum to the total as a result of rounding.

Rate Rebates

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the local authorities in Great Britain in which *(a)* more than half and *(b)* more than a quarter of ratepayers receive 100 per cent. rate rebates.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

General Managers

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for all general manager appointments at unit level known to his Department *(a)* the name of the general manager, *(b)* whether that person was previously employed within the same district or elsewhere in the National Health Service or outside the National Health Service, *(c)* whether that person was previously employed as an administrator, a treasurer, a nurse, a doctor or in some other capacity and *(d)* that person's salary as general manager;

(2) if he will give for each health district *(a)* the name of the general manager, *(b)* whether that person was previously employed within the same district or elsewhere in the National Health Service or outside the National Health Service, *(c)* whether that person was previously employed as an administrator, treasurer, nurse, doctor or in some other capacity and *(d)* that person's salary as general manager.

Mr. Hayhoe: General managers are employees of their health authorities and therefore the hon. Member may wish to approach regional health authority chairmen for some of the information he has requested. Salaries currently in payment are on the basis set out in paragraph 12 of annex C of HC(84)13, a copy of which is in the Library. The latest information held centrally about the previous employment of managers is as follows:

	District General Managers	*Unit General Managers*
Previous employer		
(a) Same National Health Service district	122	294
(b) Other National Health Service district	27	165
(c) Outside the National Health Service	39	50
	188	509
Previous National Health Service employment		
(a) Administrator	112	297
(b) Treasurer	18	5
(c) Nurse	4	52
(d) Doctor	15	71
(e) Other	—	34
	149	459

Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the National Health Service hospitals which had accident and emergency departments in 1978; and if he will list the hospitals with accident and emergency departments in 1984.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have the information requested as soon as possible.

Claimants (Camden)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for the latest available year *(a)* the number of disqualifactions for unemployment benefit and *(b)* the number of deductions from supplementary benefit experienced by claimants in Camden on the ground of voluntary unemployment.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Amniocentesis

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the present provision of amniocentesis; and if he will make a statement about the prospects for the extension of this service.

Mr. Whitney: Facilities for amniocentesis are available through all consultant obstetric departments. Extension of the service is a matter for individual health authorities.

Cytotoxic Tests

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the cytotoxic test for allergy and its provision on the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: The tests done for a particular patient are a matter for the clinical judgment of the responsible medical practitioner. However, we are advised that the results of cytotoxic food tests are likely to be so variable that most allergologists would not regard them as reliable or of value.

NHS (Pay Claims)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he will take to ensure that in future pay claims from National Health Service staff reach settlement in a significantly shorter period of time than in the past.

Mr. Hayhoe: If the hon. Member has in mind staff covered by National Health Service Whitley councils, the conduct of pay negotiations is a matter for the two sides to determine.

Coronary Heart Disease

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the policy implications for the United Kingdom of the World Health Organisation's study of coronary heart disease published in April.

Mr. Whitney: We are studying the report and will be assessing its implications in developing our policies on combating the present level of coronary heart disease.

Health Authorities

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of Monday 14 April, *Official Report*, columns *287-90*, why it is not his Department's policy to collect details of allocations made by regional to district health authorities.

Mr. Hayhoe: The detail of cash allocations to district health authorities is a matter for regional health authorities. The Department monitors the effect of cash allocations on districts' distance from their resource allocation targets, through regions' annual short term programmes, and receives information on expenditure through districts' annual accounts. Monitoring of cash allocations by the Department in addition would be unnecessary and wasteful.

Research Management

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the report on his Department's research management written by Mr. T. Nodder.

Mr. Whitney: The report by Mr. T. E. Nodder was an internal document. The new chief scientist, when appointed, will be asked to consider Mr. Nodder's report. We hope to announce conclusions on the future of research management arrangements in DHSS in the light of advice from the chief scientist.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department has taken to reappraise its research management structure, as stated in paragraph 97 of the Government response to the second report from the Social Services Committee, 1984-85 Session, Cmnd. 9674.

Mr. Whitney: The process of reappraising the Department's research management structure is continuing. The final outcome will be decided after a new chief scientist has been appointed.

Computers (Procurement Policy)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is Her Majesty's Government's procurement policy on computers for statutory organisations such as regional health authorities.

Mr. Whitney: Comprehensive guidance on the purchasing of computer hardware and software has been issued to all health authorities. This guidance reflects the Government's policy for computer procurement in the public sector generally.

Doctors

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the latest figures of doctor shortages reported by the regional health authorities with the comparative figures for one year ago and five years ago.

Mr. Hayhoe: Statistics on medical posts without permanent holders are collected centrally only for the consultant and senior registrar grades. The latest available figures are given in the following table.

Consultant and Senior Registrar posts not occupied by permanent holders (England, 30 September)

	1980	*1984*	*1985*
Consultant posts not occupied by permanent holders	1,106	932	632
of which			
wholly or partly occupied by locums	247·8	170·6	209·3
not occupied by locums	673·6	682·8	363·8
Senior registrar posts without permanent holders	227	213	148
of which			
wholly or partly occupied by locums	47·1	65·1	51·9
not occupied by locums	175·1	143·9	92·8

Notes:

1. Posts are given in numbers and locum occupancy in whole-time equivalent.

2. Figures for 1980 and 1984 include planning approvals for new posts not advertised by 30 September. Figures for 1985 exclude such approvals.

In 1984-85, the numbers of consultants in post increased by 283 or 2 per cent. from 13,919 to 14,202.

I am considering carefully reports of difficulties of recruiting for junior medical posts in particular areas and in particular specialties, but the total numbers of doctors in hospitals in England increased from 31,515 in 1978 to 35,859 in 1985, or by 13·8 per cent. The comparable 1984-85 increase was 521 or 1·5 per cent.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many doctors from European Economic Community countries are now in general practice or in hospitals in the United Kingdom compared to one year ago and five years ago.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that information in the form requested is not available. Centrally collected data about hospital doctors classify place of birth (not nationality or country of qualification) by the categories of (i) Great Britain, (ii) Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic and (iii) elsewhere. The latest available figures for the latter two categories are given in the table following.

Table 1: Hospital doctors by place of birth

	Northern Ireland and Irish Republic	*Elsewhere*
1980	791	10,760
1984	835	10,095
1985	851	10,027

It is generally accepted that doctors born elsewhere are mainly from the New Commonwealth.

Centrally collected information about general medical practitioners does classify place of birth by European Community countries.

Table 2: Unrestricted principals in general practice in England Doctors born in European Community countries other than the UK or the Irish Republic

	1980	*1984*	*1985*
All places of birth	21,812	23,640	24,035
Born in the EC	*50	66	67

*excludes doctors born in Greece which joined the Community on 1 January 1981.

Published General Medical Council (GMC) figures give numbers of doctors qualified in other European Community countries granted full registration in the United Kingdom but do not show how many so registered exercised the right to practice in the United Kingdom. These figures are as follows.

Number of doctors qualified in other European Community Countries granted full registration by the GMC

Year	*Number*
1977	85
1978	109
1979	124
1980	134
1981	184
1982	264
1983	327
1984	302
1985	332

Central Birmingham Health Authority

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will institute an inquiry into the financial management of Central Birmingham health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Hospital Service, Northamptonshire

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out for each of the last eight years and predictions for the current year, both in cost and real terms and before and after making adjustments for Milton Keynes, the moneys spent both as revenue and capital within the hospital service in Northamptonshire and so far as is possible within the area of the Northampton district health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to consult the chairman of the Oxford regional health authority.

Nurses (Teaching Staff)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that the re-grading of nurse educators has the same criteria in applying grade indication factors for each regional health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: Under the terms of the flexible grading structure for senior educational staff, agreed by the nursing and midwifery staffs negotiating council, employing authorities have discretion to grade individual posts according to the weight of the particular responsibilities attaching to them by applying the nationally agreed "grading indication factors". The agreement also requires regional health authorities to exercise surveillance in order to ensure that grading levels proposed by employing authorities are appropriate to defined responsibilities and in line with existing grading standards.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of nurse teachers now in post in England and Wales; what is the percentage shortfall of the total number of established posts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The total number* of all grades of teaching staff funded by the English and Welsh National Boards for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting in March 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) expressed as whole-time equivalents was 3,557·6 and 213·65 respectively—a total of 3,771·25 for England and Wales.

Detailed information about vacancies is not collected centrally in England, but I am aware that a recent sample survey of English health authorities for the review body for nursing staff, midwives and health visitors showed that at 31 March 1985 6 per cent. of all whole-time equivalent funded posts in education, which includes non-tutorial staff, remained vacant for over three months.

In Wales, the funded establishment and the number in post are matters for the Welsh national board to determine in liaison with individual schools of nursing and details are in the board's annual report for 1984-85, a copy of which is in the Library.

* Source: Annual reports of the English and Welsh national boards for 1984-85.

Drug Trials

Mr. Allan Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will initiate an immediate

investigation into the conduct of those drug field trials in south Wales where participating medical practitioners are receiving payments of £150 per patient, patients are not informed that they are participating in a trial and doctors are, without permission signing consent forms in the names of patients.

Mr. Hayhoe: The hon. Member's question does not supply sufficient information to enable me to identify the particular trials to which he refers. If the hon. Member is able to let me have more information about the trials, either I or my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be glad to consider it.

Generics (UK) Ltd.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Generics (UK) Ltd. has a United Kingdom manufacturer's licence to manufacture medicinal dosage forms or to package by limited assembly only.

Mr. Hayhoe: Generics (UK) Limited has a licence under the Medicines Acts of 1968 and 1971 to manufacture and assemble medicinal products of the description or general classification specified in the licence.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the overseas sources of the manufacture of medicines in respect of which product licences have been granted to Generics (UK) Ltd.; and whether all these sources have been inspected by the British Medicines Inspectorate in the last 12 months.

Mr. Hayhoe: All information provided to the licensing authority in support of applications made under the Medicine Act 1968 is treated as confidential under that Act.

Following the grant of a product licence, brief details, not including sources of manufacture, are published in the official gazettes.

Not all the manufacturing sites listed as sources for Generics (UK) Ltd. have been inspected within the last 12 months. Inspection of United Kingdom and overseas sites are not necessarily performed on an annual basis.

The frequency of inspections is a matter for the discretion of the licensing authority taking into account all relevant factors.

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many whole-time equivalent community psychiatric nurses have been employed by each district health authority in each year from 1974 to the latest available date, broken down by *(a)* registered MNs, *(b)* RMNS, *(c)* SEN-M, *(d)* SEN-MH, *(e)* others and *(f)* total in England and Wales.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as is available as soon as possible.

Immigration Control Procedures

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assistance his Department provided to the Commission for Racial Equality with regard to its formal investigation into immigration control procedures s810.3 on liaison with other Departments.

Mr. Major: None. I understand that the Home Office wrote in September 1983 to the commission providing information on liaison between itself and the Department.

Insulation Projects

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for the future funding of local insulation projects run by volunteer groups following the proposed abolition of single payments.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out in a table the national insurance contributions liability at its weekly equivalent of *(a)* contracted-in employees through class 1, *(b)* contracted-out employees through class 1 and *(c)* self-employed people through class 2 contributions and class 4 contributions net of tax relief, in 1986-87, assuming their income is at the following constant levels throughout the year: (i) £38, £60, £95, £285, and £1,000 per week, (ii) £2,075 and £4,450 per year and (iii) 0·5, 1·0 and 2·0 times average female earnings and 0·5, 0·75 and 1·5 times average male earnings, respectively, and at the minimum level of income to benefit in full from the tax relief on class 4 contributions at 40 per cent., 45 per cent., 50 per cent., 55 per cent., and 60 per cent. as a single person with no other tax allowances.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *78*]: The information is as follows:

Earnings £s	*Weekly Equivalent Rates *£s*			
	Employees (Class 1)		*Self Employed (Class 2 and Class 4)*	
	Not Contracted-Out	*Contracted-Out*	*National Insurance*	*†Tax Relief*
Weekly				
38·00	1·90	1·90	‡3·75	nil
60·00	4·22	3·74	3·75	nil
95·00	8·57	7·34	4·34	0·09
285·00	25·65	20·34	16·31	1·82
1,000·00	25·65	20·34	16·31	3·77
Annual				
2,075·00	1·99	1·95	3·75	nil
4,450·00	6·00	4·98	3·75	nil
Average Earnings (female)				
134·10‖				

Earnings £s	Weekly Equivalent Rates *£s			
	Employees (Class 1)		Self Employed (Class 2 and Class 4)	
	Not Contracted-Out	Contracted-Out	National Insurance	†Tax Relief
0·50 × Average Earnings	4·71	4·08	3·75	nil
1·00 × Average Earnings	12·08	10·01	6·81	0·44
2·00 × Average Earnings	24·14	19·19	15·26	1·67
Average Earnings (male) 204·20‖				
0·50 × Average Earnings	9·20	7·82	4·79	0·15
0·75 × Average Earnings	13·79	11·31	8·01	0·62
1·50 × Average Earnings	25·65	20·34	16·31	1·82
Minimum level of annual income to benefit in full from tax relief on Class 4				
19,862 (40 per cent. relief)	25·65	20·34	16·31	2·52
22,862 (45 per cent. relief)	25·65	20·34	16·31	2·83
28,062 (50 per cent. relief)	25·65	20·34	16·31	3·14
35,962 (55 per cent. relief)	25·65	20·34	16·31	3·45
43,862 (60 per cent. relief)	25·65	20·34	16·31	3·77

* Figures for class 1 are from national insurance contribution tables and are not exact percentage calculations. Figures for class 4 and associated tax relief are rounded on a weekly basis instead of the normal annual calculation.

† These figures represent the weekly value of the tax relief on class 4 contributions at the proposed 1986-87 tax levels.

‡ A self-employed person with earnings of £38·00 per week will have annual earnings below the 1986-87 small earnings exception limit of £2,075 and may claim exception from payment of class 2 contributions.

‖ Provisional figures for all occupations for February 1986. The average is extrapolated from the April 1985 new earnings survey using the average earnings index. The latter is adjusted for seasonal factors and for the effect of major industrial disputes.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the current level of class 2 national insurance contributions if they had not been reduced in October 1985 and if they had been increased in April 1986 in line with the usual formula; and at that level what would be the extra income to the national insurance fund or the Exchequer.

Mr. Major *[pursuant to his reply,* 6 May 1986, c. *78]*: On the assumptions in the hon. Member's question, the 1986-87 class 2 national insurance contribution rate would be £5·10 per week (net of the 30p abatement in force in October 1985). The full year effect on the national insurance fund, including Treasury supplement and interest, is estimated to be £135 million. All figures are calculated on the same basis as the report by the Government Actuary on the draft of the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) Order 1985 (Cmnd. 9672).

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what level of class 2 and class 4 contributions would be necessary to ensure that the self-employed paid the full actuarial cost of the benefits which they receive.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply,* 6 May 1986, c. *78*]: Self-employed national insurance contribution (NIC) rates were last reviewed in detail when setting NIC rates for 1983-84 (paragraph 5, report by the Government Actuary on the draft of the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) Order 1982: Cmnd. 8742). The NIC rates were calculated in accordance with the methods adopted by the Government in 1977, as set out in the report by the Government Actuary on the draft of the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) (No. 2) Order 1977 (Cmnd. 7036). Since the last review of self-employed rates for 1983-84, the effective class 1 NIC rates against which comparison is made have remained unchanged. For administrative reasons the self-employed are charged a combination of flat rate (class 2) and profits-related (class 4) NICs. To remain in line with the 1977 method the class 4 rate should remain at its 1983-84 level and has done so: in addition, the class 2 rate would have to be revalued in line with the lower profits limit, (which is itself uprated by the same factor as the basic pension) to produce a class 2 rate in 1986-87 of £5·40 per week.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the gain to the national insurance fund or the Exchequer of removing the upper earnings limit for class 1 national insurance contributions; and what reduction could be made in the standard rate of contribution using that gain.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply,* 6 May 1986, c. *78*]: If the upper earnings limit (UEL) for class 1 national insurance contributions (NICs) were removed from 6 April 1986, but with no change in the UEL for the contracting-out rebate, the full year effect on the national insurance fund, including Treasury supplement and interest, is estimated to be a gain of £780 million.

If that were used to alter NICs in the present employer-employee ratio of 10·45:9 then reductions in the standard rate of 0·30 per cent. and 0·25 per cent., respectively, could be made. These figures assume no change in the reduced rate NICs.

All figures are calculated on the same basis as the report by the Government Actuary on the draft of the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) Order 1985 (Cmnd. 9672).

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the gain to the national insurance fund or the Exchequer of removing the reduced rates of national insurance for very low earners, in such a way that the full rate of contribution were payable down to the lower earnings limit.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply,* 6 May 1986, c. *78*]: If from 6 April 1986 national insurance contribution (NIC) rates returned to the pre-October 1985 structure but without an upper earnings limit for employers' NICs, then the full year effect on the national insurance fund, including Treasury supplement and interest, is estimated to be a gain of £1,450 million.

This figure is calculated on the same basis as the report by the Government Actuary on the draft of the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) Order 1985 (Cmnd. 9672).

Dentistry (Statistics)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the proportion of five-year-olds with dental decay in each year since 1974.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *87*]: This information is not collected annually. Surveys of children's dental health show that the estimated proportion of five-year-olds in England and Wales who had experienced dental decay dropped from 72 per cent. in 1973 to 49 per cent. in 1983.

Primary Health Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library the data on which paragraph 7 of chapter 6 of the Green Paper on primary health care is based.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *87*]: I have done so.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the performance indicators established for family practitioner committees.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *87*]: I have arranged for a copy of the 1984-85 performance indicators to be placed in the Library together with the 1986 requirements which have recently been issued.

Medicines (Costs)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the cost in each year since 1979 of medicines prescribed by doctors and dentists;

(2) what was the cost in each year since 1979 of dispensing medicines prescribed by doctors and dentists.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *87*]: The information available is in the table.

England: Family practitioner services

(i) *Year*	*(ii)* *Net cost (after discount) of prescriptions dispensed* £ *million*	*(iii)* **Dispensing costs* £ *million*	*(iv)* *Total* £ *million*
1979	584	155	739
1980	705	193	898
1981	803	223	1,026
1982	924	257	1,181
1983	1,034	274	1,308
1984	1,080	329	1,409
1985	1,173	345	1,518

*These do not include the basic practice allowance.

Dental Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of persons per general dental practitioner by health district.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *87*]: The information requested is available only in relation to regional health authority and family practitioner committee areas. The position, as at 30 September 1984, was as follows:

Area	*Number of persons per dentist*
Northern Regional Health Authority	4,387
Cleveland FPC	4,689
Cumbria FPC	3,778
Durham FPC	5,116
Northumberland FPC	4,556
Gateshead FPC	4,658
Newcastle upon Tyne FPC	3,231
North Tyneside FPC	3,660
South Tyneside FPC	5,863
Sunderland FPC	4,908
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	3,772
Humberside FPC	5,069
North Yorkshire FPC	3,156
Bradford FPC	3,807
Calderdale FPC	3,824
Kirklees FPC	4,197
Leeds FPC	3,018
Wakefield FPC	4,503
Trent Regional Health Authority	4,402
Derbyshire FPC	4,798
Leicester FPC	4,352
Lincolnshire FPC	5,251
Nottinghamshire FPC	4,311
Barnsley FPC	4,230
Doncaster FPC	4,367
Rotherham FPC	4,353
Sheffield FPC	3,603
East Anglian Regional Health Authority	3,744
Cambridgeshire FPC	4,089
Norfolk FPC	3,741
Suffolk FPC	3,460
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	2,281
Bedfordshire FPC	4,126
Hertfordshire FPC	2,686
Barnet FPC	1,936
Brent and Harrow FPC	2,282
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow FPC	2,479
Hillingdon FPC	3,317
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster FPC	946
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	3,070
Essex FPC	3,848
Barking and Havering FPC	3,891
Camden and Islington FPC	1,631
City and East London FPC	3,110
Enfield and Haringey FPC	2,633
Redbridge and Waltham Forest FPC	2,984
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	2,921
East Sussex FPC	2,451
Kent FPC	3,345
Greenwich and Bexley FPC	3,475
Bromley FPC	2,688
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham FPC	2,544
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	2,437
Surrey FPC	2,404
West Sussex FPC	2,492
Croydon FPC	2,199
Kingston and Richmond FPC	2,416
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth FPC	2,596
Wessex Regional Health Authority	3,303

Area	Number of persons per dentist
Dorset FPC	3,074
Hampshire FPC	3,239
Wiltshire FPC	3,803
Isle of Wight FPC	3,454
Oxford Regional Health Authority	3,220
Berkshire FPC	2,968
Buckinghamshire FPC	2,988
Northamptonshire FPC	3,999
Oxfordshire FPC	3,231
South Western Regional Health Authority	2,974
Avon FPC	2,839
Cornwall and Isle of Scilly FPC	3,301
Devon FPC	2,886
Gloucestershire FPC	3,031
Somerset FPC	3,127
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	4,076
Hereford and Worcester FPC	3,730
Salop FPC	3,222
Staffordshire FPC	4,949
Warwickshire FPC	3,916
Birmingham FPC	3,657
Coventry FPC	3,648
Dudley FPC	4,487
Sandwell FPC	4,551
Solihull FPC	4,444
Walsall FPC	5,085
Wolverhampton FPC	4,536
Mersey Regional Health Authority	3,696
Cheshire FPC	3,578
Liverpool FPC	3,854
St. Helens and Knowsley FPC	4,466
Sefton FPC	3,643
Wirral FPC	3,245
North Western Regional Health Authority	3,680
Lancashire FPC	4,009
Bolton FPC	4,020
Bury FPC	3,104
Manchester FPC	2,934
Oldham FPC	4,007
Rochdale FPC	4,043
Salford FPC	4,330
Stockport FPC	3,011
Themeside FPC	3,588
Trafford FPC	3,066
Wigan FPC	4,454

Nurses

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of nurses failed to complete their training in the latest year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 May 1986, c.*291*]: Provisional information from the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting shows that 5·6 per cent. of the total number of student and pupil nurses at various stages of training discontinued during the year ending March 1986.

Advertising Agencies

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which advertising agencies have been engaged by his Department for each of the past five years; and what sums each have been paid.

Mr. Fowler [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c*74*]: The information requested is as follows:

Subject	Expenditure
1981-82	
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	
Help for the handicapped	528
Blood donor recruitment	95,056
Nursing recruitment	702,491
Hospital careers	26,989
National Insurance uprating	92,755
Kingsway Media Ltd.	
Benefits	27,321
Child benefit	18,782
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	
Family Income Supplement	501,918
National Insurance contributions	20,211
Civil Service Industrial Action	174,455
1982-83	
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	
Blood donor recruitment	36,272
Nursing recruitment	284,242
TBWA	
Whooping cough	240,128
Blood donor recruitment	38,264
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	
Housing benefit	293,024
Family Income Supplement	539,782
Company Directors National Insurance	9,981
Form E111	76,775
Employers' Statutory Sick Pay	471,250
Kingsway Media	
Emergency pay	65,206
Register of manufacturers	969
1983-84	
TBWA	
Blood donor recruitment	100,322
Organ donation	391,392
Nursing recruitment	675,077
Dorlands Advertising Ltd.	
Portable pensions	26,081
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	
One Parent benefit	64,779
Voluntary Unemployment Deductions	98,784
Benefits in work	12,434
National Insurance uprating	171,897
National Insurance numbercards	162,697
Employers' Statutory Sick Pay	495,895
1984-85	
Dorlands Advertising Ltd.	
Laser surgery	6,157
TBWA	
Nurse recruitment	688,991
Blood donor recruitment	63,401
Adverse reactions	25,000
Organ donation	330,000
Yellowhammer	
Misuse of drugs	298,274
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	
National Insurance numbercard	253,801
National Insurance contributions	176,738
Severe Disablement Allowance	402,583
Computer Strike Emergency	482,216
£10 Christmas Bonus	97,961
Dorlands Advertising Ltd.	
Help for the handicapped	701
Computer Strike Emergency	715,151

Subject	Expenditure
Social Security Reviews	20,056
Child benefit	76,509
Pensioners living abroad	56,402
1985-86	
Yellowhammer	
Misuse of drugs	1,041,826
Posterlink Selection Ltd.	
Misuse of drugs	140,122
Poster Media Ltd.	
Blood donor recruitment	76,923
FCO Ltd.	
Anti-teenage smoking	280,288
TBWA	
Adverse reactions to drugs	25,220
Blood donor recruitment	96,020
Nurse recruitment	783,156
Health Equipment Information	16,607
AIDS health education	407,856
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	
NI Numbercard	518,249
Social Security Reviews—consultation	179,596
Severe Disablement Allowance	177,215
Occupational Pensions	200,219
Severe Weather payments	252,888
Dorlands Advertising Ltd.	
Married women's half-test	31,238

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 13 May 1986

PRIME MINISTER

Libya

27. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister whether, prior to her decision to approve the use of bases in the United Kingdom for the air attack on Libya, President Reagan provided her with any estimate of the scale and type of the additional casualties which he judged would result from the non-use of United Kingdom-based F1-11 aircraft in the operation; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to my statement to the House on 15 April.

Lifeboatmen (Taxation)

Sir Peter Emery asked the Prime Minister whether she will take action to ensure that no part of the call-out payments made to the men who man the lifeboats around Britain's shores should rank for tax, but at all times be treated for taxation purposes as a proper and legitimate payment of expenses.

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary made clear in his written reply on 15 April, at column 354, the Inland Revenue has not proposed any change in the tax treatment of these payments to voluntary lifeboatmen, which can continue to be made without deduction of tax under PAYE.

Scotch Whisky

Mr. Sims asked the Prime Minister if, in the course of her visit to Korea, she was able to press the Government to liberalise the market for Scotch whisky bottled in Scotland; and what was the response.

The Prime Minister: I pressed the Korean Government to open their market in general, and they have undertaken to consider a timetable for the liberalisation of bottled Scotch whisky. They have already agreed not to implement the threatened ban on the import of bulk whisky.

Nuclear Weapons Programme

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Prime Minister if she will list the responsibilities discharged by the Department of Energy in support of the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons programme.

The Prime Minister: The Department of Energy has no direct responsibilities in support of the United Kingdom weapons programme. It does, however, sponsor British Nuclear Fuels plc., which is a defence contractor.

Foreign Vegetables (Duties)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the increase in duties on foreign vegetables arising out of Spain's accession to the European Economic Community.

The Prime Minister: Throughout the Spanish accession negotiations there was continuous close co-ordination between the Government Departments concerned, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. This level of co-operation has continued since the application of the common agricultural policy to Spain on 1 March. We have pressed vigorously for a reduction in the present Spanish tariff on frozen peas imported from the Ten.

Engagements

Mr. Flannery asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 May.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 May.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 May.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

EC (Agricultural Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the failure of the Common Market Commission to provide to the Council monthly reports on the trend of agricultural spending as provided by the Council agreement of 4 December 1984; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I would not expect this issue to be discussed at the European Council. The Commission regularly informs the member states on the trend in agricultural spending, but we will continue to press the Commission to provide information in the appropriate forum in accordance with its undertakings in the budget discipline agreement.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Officers

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet able to publish the report of the study of prison officers' complementing and shift systems, to which he referred in his speech to the House on 6 May, *Official Report*, columns 44-45; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: A study of complementing and shift systems undertaken by a joint team of Prison Department officials and management consultants was set in hand by my predecessor, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) last September. I have now had an opportunity to study the

report and have decided that it should be published. I shall be placing copies of the report in the Library. I shall be making the report available to the prison service generally and to the Prison Officers' Association.

The report presents a telling indictment of the present shift and complementing systems in the prison service and the working practices which surround them. It is critical of the systems, not of those who operate them. It makes recommendations for new systems which would release large amounts of now unproductive capacity which ought to be used for other purposes: the report suggests that wasted capacity amounts to 15 to 20 per cent. The professional advice which I have had suggests that the recommended new systems are soundly based and practical and I have asked that proposals for change based on them be worked up as quickly as possible by Prison Department management. As part of this process, account will be taken of the findings of a scrutiny led by the central efficiency unit of the escorting to court of prisoners held in prison service establishments as well as of an internal review of the management structure of prisons.

Taken together, the recommendations of these studies represent a major programme of reform for the prison service and as such they will obviously need to be discussed with those who represent the staff of the service; including the Prison Officers' Association. One of prison officers' principal concerns will clearly be the effect which these prospective changes will have on how prison officers are paid. As part of the overall package for reform which we shall be developing, therefore, we shall also be looking at what needs to be done to modernise pay systems. The package which we shall be proposing will seek to provide the changes which are necessary to enable the service to be organised more effectively and pay systems which will give staff and management a fair deal.

The prison service has to be reshaped in relation to the way it organises itself to do the work required of it. Recent events have amply proved that. The work of modernisation needs to be carried forward urgently. I think it would be reasonable, given the circumstances, to set a target date of April 1987 for the new systems. I trust that all those who will be involved in examining and discussing the scope for change will recognise the importance of the task which faces them and will approach it with good sense and understanding.

Aircraft Hijacking (Extradition)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to give effect to the conventions of Chicago, Tokyo, The Hague and Montreal to permit the extradition of terrorists involved in the hijacking of aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Tokyo Convention Act 1967 gave effect to that convention in United Kingdom law. The Hague and Montreal conventions were implemented respectively through the Hijacking Act 1971 and the Protection of Aircraft act 1973, both of which have since been repealed and their provisions consolidated into the Aviation Security Act 1982. Orders have been made under these Acts and under the Extradition Act 1870 making the offences referred to in the conventions extraditable in respect of the contracting parties to the conventions. The Chicago convention, which the United Kingdom ratified in 1947, contains no provision for extradition.

Crime Rate (South Glamorgan)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of South Glamorgan about the action he is taking to combat the increase in the crime rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable that the crime rate in the South Wales force area rose by 1·28 per cent. during 1985 and that reported crime in the Cardiff, West area fell by 10·3 per cent. The chief constable is taking a number of steps to encourage public participation in crime prevention measures and beleives that these figure, which compare favourably with a national average increase of 3 per cent. in reported crime, are an indication of the success which is being achieved.

Civil Defence

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in view of the nuclear disaster in the Ukraine, if he is satisfied that civil defence in the United Kingdom is sufficiently staffed and is able to respond to emergencies, in cases of nuclear fallout; and if he will make a statement;

(2) in view of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in the Ukraine, if he will consider increasing the grants for civil defence purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Civil defence resources in this country can often be used to advantage against peacetime emergencies, but there has been no significant role for them in the response to the effects of the explosion at Chernobyl. We are separately examining the resources available to local authorities as a part of the assessment of their civil defence preparedness.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total capital grant given to South Glamorgan county council for civil defence purposes; how the money is being used, from the latest available information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the financial year 1984-85, the most recent year for which final figures are available, South Glamorgan county council received £61,518·86 civil defence grant on net audited expenditure of £79,863·56. The main elements were the county emergency planning team, the provision and equipping of emergency centres, staff training in civil defence, and the rental of emergency communications equipment.

In common with all other county level authorities in England and Wales South Glamorgan county council was asked on 21 January 1985 to complete its plans under the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 and to send copies to us by 15 January 1986. In the absence of any response from South Glamorgan, officials wrote to the council on 25 February to say that my right hon. Friend required copies of the plans and to draw attention to regulation 6*(f)* of the Civil Defence (Grant) Regulations 1953 under which grant may be withheld if a document that has been required is not provided. The council responded by sending copies of plans which dealt only with peacetime emergencies. The council was informed on 3 April that, subject to considering any representations it might wish to make, my right hon. Friend proposed to withhold £45,518 from the

grant that would otherwise be payable for 1985-86, until such time as the plans required were received. We are now awaiting the council's representations.

Violent Crime

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the change in Cardiff in the number of crimes involving the use of objects with intent to harm since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Numbers of recorded offences of violence against the person by police force area are published annually in chapter 2 of the Command Paper on "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", and most recently in a Home Office "Statistical Bulletin" (table 6 of Issue Number 4/86). The only information which is collected centrally on the use of weapons relates to notifiable offences in which firearms were reported to have been used. In 1984 there were 205 such offences recorded by the South Wales police, which was 7 per cent. less than the number recorded in 1983. These figures are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, Supplementary Tables", volume 3 (table S.3.1(A) of the issue for 1984). Figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Prison Officers

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the change in the number of prison officers employed at each of the London prisons during the last 12 months.

Mr. Mellor: The number of staff of the prison officer class in post at each of the London prisons on 1 April 1986 and on the corresponding date last year is as follows:

	1 April 1986	*1 April 1985*
Brixton	661	625
Holloway	332	348
Pentonville	313	339
Wandsworth	411	409
Wormwood Scrubs	498	516

Merseyside Police

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions over the past five years the Merseyside police authority has requested an increase in its force establishment; how many additional posts have been agreed to; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There has been one such application. The new Merseyside police authority, which took over responsibility on 1 April 1986, included a proposal for an increase in the police establishment of the force in its manpower plans for the financial year 1986-87. My right hon. Friend approved 72 additional police posts for the force on 26 March 1986.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Normanton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in view of the developments in the last two years of the mini-computer and word-processing equipment market, he will reconsider the relevance of the Data Protection Act and provision for greater exemptions from its provisions.

Mr. Waddington: The Act is not yet fully in force and it is too soon to consider whether any changes are required.

Mr. Normanton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide an estimate of the cost of litigation and the services of the courts for which his Department is making contingency plans as a result of the implementation and enforcement of the Data Protection Act;

(2) if he will estimate how many additional lawyers are going to be needed, within the relevant Government Departments, as a result of and the enforcement of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Waddington: No. We do not believe that it is possible to make estimates of the type the hon. Gentleman suggests with enough precision to be of any value.

Mr. Normanton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civil servants have been appointed to staff the office of the Registrar of Data Protection; what increase is anticipated over the next three years; and what will be the gross cost per annum to the Exchequer arising from all aspects of the implementation of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Waddington: The registrar has at present 44 permanent and 36 temporary staff, of which only one is a civil servant. The Registrar is currently reviewing his long-term staffing requirements and it is not possible to provide a reliable estimate of the eventual complement he will require.

It is intended that the cost of the registrar's operations under the Act will be covered by registration fees received from data users. Some Government Departments are likely to incur costs in meeting the subject access provisions of the Act and in other compliance costs, some estimates of which were included in the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Data Protection Bill in 1983.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be able to publish the total of those who have registered under the Data Protection Act 1984 and to estimate the number of users who have not done so.

Mr. Waddington: The Data Protection Registrar estimates that by 10 May he had received approximately 110,000 applications for registration. Applications are continuing to be received in considerable numbers and it will be some time before he will be able to make any estimate of the number of data users who may not have registered.

Armley and Wakefield Prisons

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were detained in the Armley (Leeds) and Wakefield prisons on 30 March; and how many prisoners these prisons are meant to hold.

Mr. Mellor: Figures for 30 March are not recorded centrally. On 31 March the population and certified normal accommodation of Her Majesty's prison Leeds and Her Majesty's prison Wakefield were as follows:

	Population	Certified normal accommodation
Leeds	1,159	630
Wakefield	734	742

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Liverpool.

Mr. Hurd: I have not visited Liverpool recently, although I shall do so on 16 May. My hon. Friend the Minister of State visited Merseyside on 22 April. He had discussions about policing matters with the chief constable and other police officers, with members of the police authority, and with members of the Police Superintendents' Association and the Police Federation. He then visited the Albert dock and opened Granada Television's news centre there.

Mr. and Mrs. Stapleton

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answer of 6 May, *Official Report*, columns 21-22, if he will call for a further report from the chief constable of Lincolnshire as to the whereabouts of diaries, a birth certificate, and papers relating to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise which were seized from Mr. and Mrs. Stapleton and have neither been returned to them nor produced as evidence following disclosure for the committal proceedings.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that all five birth certificates and some Customs and Excise documents seized by the police were returned to Mrs. Stapleton either direct on 26 February or through her solicitor on 19 and 21 March. The remainder of the Customs and Excise documents are being held by the police at the request of the liquidator. The diaries are being retained by the police as evidence in forthcoming criminal proceedings; representatives for the defence have been informed as to their availability for examination.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the name, date of death, circumstances of death, and inquest verdict in respect of each prisoner of 20 years old or less who has died in penal institutions since 1 January 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information about the date and circumstances of death and the inquest verdicts in respect of prisoners aged under 21 who have died in Prison Department custody (including outside hospitals) in England and Wales since 1 January 1980 is as follows.

It is not the practice to publish the names of such prisoners.

Date of Death	Circumstances of Death	Inquest Verdict
20 January 1980	Found with plastic bag over head	Suicide
31 March 1980	Refusal of food	Self neglect (Misadventure)
22 April 1980	Found drowned in bath	Murder
14 May 1980	Collapsed whilst playing basket ball	Accidental death
26 December 1980	Hanging	Suicide
24 June 1981	Acute necrotising myocarditis	Natural causes
9 September 1981	Hear. failure, following diabetic coma	Misadventure
20 September 1981	Set fire to bedding	Misadventure
30 October 1981	Carcinoma of rectum	Natural causes
30 December 1981	Hanging	Suicide
12 January 1982	Acute asthma	Natural causes
20 January 1982	Hanging	Suicide
7 July 1982	Hanging	Lack of care
13 August 1982	Cerebral haemorrhage	Natural causes
9 September 1982	Asthma	Natural causes
11 October 1982	Hanging	Suicide
21 October 1982	Hanging	Suicide
22 November 1982	Brain damage	No inquest held
23 November 1982	Hanging	Suicide
7 December 1982	Coma	Natural causes
3 February 1983	Strangled himself	Misadventure
15 March 1983	Hanging	Suicide
10 April 1983	Hanging	Suicide
13 July 1983	Hanging	Suicide
24 July 1983	Cancer of liver	Natural causes
21 February 1984	Cerebral haemorrhage	Natural causes
7 April 1984	Hanging	Misadventure
19 May 1984	Hanging	Suicide
20 June 1984	Hanging	Suicide
9 July 1984	Asphyxia due to epileptic convulsion due to diabetic coma	Natural causes
9 October 1984	Hanging	Misadventure
16 October 1984	Inmate found stabbed	Misadventure
21 December 1984	Broncho pneumonia, Hepatic failure, Hepatitis	Natural causes
24 March 1985	Hanging	Open verdict
13 April 1985	Killed in motor accident whilst on day visit	Verdict not known
26 May 1985	Inmate collapsped and died after running in sports practice	Natural causes
24 July 1985	Asthmatic attack	Natural causes

Date of Death	Circumstances of Death	Inquest Verdict
26 September 1985	Hanging	Suicide
12 October 1985	Hanging	Suicide
3 January 1986	Hanging	Verdict not yet available
20 March 1986	Hanging	Verdict not yet available

ENERGY

Petrol Prices

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any evidence of arrangements between any oil companies designed to maintain high petrol prices in different parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have no evidence of any such arrangements.

Sellafield

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 27 March, *Official Report*, column *556*, how many departmental civil servants are currently employed in negotiations with the European Commission on safeguards arrangements; and how many meetings, and on what dates, have been held between the United Kingdom and the European Commission on the safeguarding of the joint civil-military material balance area at Sellafield.

Mr. Goodlad: The Department of Energy safeguards office includes four scientific civil servants who carry out the detailed negotiations with the European Commission on safeguards matters, in consultation with others as appropriate. The number of meetings held has been numerous, but over the period April 1985 to April 1986 20 meetings took place in London, Sellafield and Luxembourg on the subject of the civil-military interface at BNF Sellafield.

Private Property (Rights of Entry)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will review the powers of entry to private property by gas boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The gas industry's rights of entry for disconnection purposes have been thoroughly reviewed and will be carried forward into the Gas Bill. They maintain the safeguards contained in the Rights of Entry (Gas and Electricity) Boards Act 1954.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Japan (Leather Industry)

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry by how much Japanese leather imports into the United Kingdom have increased in the past four years; and whether he attributes this rise to any particular factor.

Mr. Alan Clark: Over the past four years Japanese leather imports have increased by £2·7 million a value of £5·6 million in 1985. Over the same period import penetration of leather and leather goods into the United Kingdom has remained around 45 per cent.: the Japanese share of this amounts to 0·5 per cent. This indicates that although Japan's imports have increased in value terms, its share of the United Kingdom market has remained stable. The rise can largely be attributed to the increase in the world price of leather.

North-West (Development Agency)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to set up a development agency for the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No. I have no such plans.

South-Western Electricity Council

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the appointment to the South-Western Electricity Council for a vacant seat, following the resignation of a member from the Isles of Scilly, will be made.

Mr. Howard: An appointment will be made very shortly.

Castleford

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will grant intermediate status to the Castleford travel-to-work area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No. While I am always willing to consider representations on assisted area coverage, it would require a very strong case indeed to convince me of the need to alter the assisted area map so soon after the last change.

Australian Wool

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what quantity of wool is imported annually from Australia; and what percentage of the wool used in the United Kingdom is represented by these imports.

Mr. Alan Clark: Imports of wool from Australia between 1981 and 1984 averaged approximately 10,000 tonnes per annum, but rose to 24,000 tonnes in 1985. However, these figures are not directly comparable with those of United Kingdom consumption, owing to differences of defination. It is estimated that imports of Australian wool accounted for approximately 20 per cent. of the United Kingdom industry consumption in 1985.

China

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the take-up of cheap credit facilities for trade with China and give details of its allocation to date.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

European Community

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the deficit in all trade and trade in manufactures, respectively, with the current membership of the EEC in the first quarters of *(a)* 1983, *(b)* 1984, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1986, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table:

United Kingdom balance of trade with the European Community (£ billion BOP basis not seasonally adjusted)*

	Total Goods	*Manufactures†*
1983 Q1	−0·1	−1·7
1984 Q1	−0·6	−2·2
1985 Q1	—	−2·3
1986 Q1	−1·5	−2·8

Source: Department of Trade and Industry.
* Present membership throughout.
† Standard International Trade Classification sections 5 to 8.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the percentage of the United Kingdom's exports of all goods and manufactured goods, respectively, which went to the current membership of the EEC in *(a)* 1983, *(b)* 1984, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* the first quarter of 1986, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table:

*Proportion of United Kingdom Exports going to the European Community**
BOP Basis not seasonally adjusted

	Total Goods Per cent.	*Manufactures† Per cent.*
1983	46	40
1984	47	40
1985	49	42
1986 Q1	49	43

Source: Department of Trade and Industry
* Present membership throughout
† Standard International Trade Classification sections 5 to 8

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the reasons for the decline in exports to the EEC and the increase in imports from the EEC in the first quarter of 1986.

Mr. Alan Clark: There were falls in the value of exports of oil, machinery and transport equipment to France, Netherlands, FR Germany and Italy. Imports from the Community countries were little changed.

Massey-Ferguson Holdings

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when, in March 1983, the Export Credits Guarantee Department converted bank guarantees into convertible preference shares in Massey-Ferguson Holdings, what proportion of those guarantees related to open account dealings; and when the financing banks received payment from Massey-Ferguson debtors in respect of those guarantees.

Mr. Alan Clark: ECGD bank guarantees were not converted into shareholdings in Massey-Ferguson Holdings. In March 1983, ECGD agreed to acquire shares in the company as part of an international financial support arrangement, designed to enable the company to continue meeting its obligations to lending banks, some of which were guaranteed by ECGD.

None of the ECGD bank guarantees concerned related to open account dealings. Subsequent payments due from Massey-Ferguson debtors have all been received without significant delay.

Soviet Union (Tourism)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what representations he has received from people with package tours booked to the Soviet Union about the terms of cancellation of tours and the eligibility for refunds, in the light of the Government's advice to avoid travelling to certain areas of the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will initiate urgent discussions with tour companies with a view to ensuring that they observe a common practice in repayment of deposits to travellers cancelling visits to the Soviet Union on the basis of Her Majesty's Government's advice in the light of the recent nuclear accident at Chernobyl; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

Gruinard Island

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the outcome of the studies into the possibility of decontaminating Gruinard Island; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In the last few years the Ministry of Defence has been investigating the possibility of developing a technique for decontaminating Gruinard Island, which is situated off the north-west coast of Scotland, and which was contaminated with anthrax in field trials in 1942 and 1943. The island has remained closed to the public since that time.

A technique has now been devised which involves treating the infected area with a solution of formaldehyde in seawater. This method has been scrutinised by an independent advisory group of eminent specialists and has been confirmed to be satisfactory. We have therefore decided that work aimed at decontamination should proceed forthwith and a contractor has been selected for the task. It is hoped that work will begin early this summer.

The success of the operation will be assessed by the Ministry of Defence, with further advice from the independent advisory group, before any decision is taken about returning the island to civil ownership.

Low-flying Aircraft

7. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints were received concerning low-flying military aircraft during the first four months of 1986.

Mr. Lee: The total number of inquiries and complaints received between 1 January and 30 April about low flying was 935.

26. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying exercises in United Kingdom airspace in 1985 involved United States Air Force F111 aircraft.

Mr. Stanley: United States Air Force F111 aircraft were involved in seven low-flying exercises in the United Kingdom during 1985.

Strategic Defence Initiative

14. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of orders to date won by United Kingdom firms to participate in the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Seven.

Defence Planning Committee

18. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the meeting of the Defence Planning Committee on 28 April.

Mr. Younger: There was no such meeting. There was, however a meeting of the Defence Review Committee, a subordinate committee, which considered a package of NATO force goals addressed to the United States.

Circular NDHD 11-82

19. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received in the last year critical of circular NDHD 11-82; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Lee: The Ministry of Defence Staff Association has made a number of representations requesting the withdrawal or substantial revision of the MOD circular notice to directors and heads of divisions (NDHD 11-82). This NDHD was issued as guidance to MOD managers in dealing with correspondence and representations from MODSA. It is shortly to be revised to reflect the MODSA recognition in respect of Royal Observer Corps and mooring, salvage and boom officer grades.

Armed Forces Pay

20. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the report submitted to him by the Armed Forces pay review board.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has received the report of the Review Body on Armed Forces Pay and hopes to announce shortly the Government's decisions.

RAF Facilities (Security)

21. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Government are satisfied with security around Royal Air Force facilities being used by the United States of America.

Mr. Stanley: Security at these bases and facilities is kept under constant review in the light of the assessed threat.

Type 23 Frigates

22. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the tendering arrangements for type 23 frigates.

Mr. Lee: I have nothing to add to the letter I sent to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) on 7 May 1986.

32. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the placing of orders for type 23 frigates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have nothing to add to the statement I made to the House at column 529 during the Navy debate on 6 February.

United States Bases

23. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek to negotiate with the United States Secretary of Defence separate arrangements for the approval of the use of United States bases in the United Kingdom for conventional and for nuclear purposes.

Mr. Stanley: No. Appropriate arrangements already exist to cover both conventional and nuclear forces.

Manned Aircraft (Armaments)

24. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the assessment of conventionally armed long-range stand-off missiles or complementary systems to manned aircraft are complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A collaborative study into the feasibility of conventionally armed long-range stand-off missiles is continuing.

Battlefield Nuclear Weapons

25. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make an announcement concerning the upgrading of battlefield nuclear weapons.

Mr. Stanley: I cannot add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) on 20 January, at columns *90-91*, and to the communiqué issued at the NATO nuclear planning group's meeting in March, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Eurofighter

2. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied that the Eurofighter will meet the in-service date requirement of the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The European fighter aircraft programme is expected to meet the in-service date requirement of the Royal Air Force. The current project definition activities will lead to a detailed timetable for the programme.

NATO

27. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about United Kingdom membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Stanley: My Department receives a considerable number of inquiries each year on many aspects of the

United Kingdom's membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. We have not been able to identify any recent representations specifically on whether or not the United Kingdom should remain a member of NATO, but I feel sure that the overwhelming majority of British people would want the United Kingdom's membership to continue.

Libya

28. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what role in the recent United States attack on Libya was undertaken by Nimrod Royal Air Force reconnaissance planes.

Mr. Stanley: None.

Exercise Lean Look

29. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on exercise Lean Look.

Mr. Stanley: We are on course towards achieving the service manpower savings planned in the support areas in Lean Look.

Crown Proceedings Act 1947

30. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what conclusions he has arrived at regarding section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 in the light of the representations made to him by the deputation of hon. Members, ex-service personnel and their relatives.

Mr. Lee: The Secretary of State has taken careful note of all the representations he has received concerning section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 and will take them fully into account when considering what, if any changes need to be made to existing legislation.

Sea Eagle Missile

31. **Mr. Speed** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration is being given to fitting the anti-ship Sea Eagle missile to the EH 101 helicopter.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The primary role planned for the EH 101 is as an anti-submarine warfare helicopter for the Royal Navy. As such it is not currently designed to carry anti-ship missiles. However, studies are being undertaken into possibilities for extending the EH 101's capability to include the carriage of missiles such as Sea Eagle, although no decision has yet been taken.

Tyres (Contracts)

Mr. Edwards asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the contracts given by his Ministry in the years 1980 to 1985 in relation to tyres for defence equipment; whether these tyres were for road vehicles, aircraft or for other purposes; and if he will specify the country of manufacture of the tyres purchased and outline the criteria for tender which may give advantage to British tyre production.

Mr. Lee: The companies awarded contracts by my Ministry in relation to tyres for defence equipment are listed below. Records are not readily available for 1980 but the 1986 contracts have already been placed and these are therefore included.

Companies awarded MOD contracts for on- and off-road vehicle tyres and inner tubes

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Avon Tyres Ltd.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bearcat International Ltd.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Continental Cup Ltd.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dunlop (Later SP Tyres)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Goodyear Tyre & Rubber Co. Ltd.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hallam Polymers Eng. Ltd.	X				X	
Michelin Tyre Co. plc.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Motorway Tyres Ltd.					X	X
Pan Engineering Co. Ltd.						X
Pirelli Ltd.	X	X	X	X	X	
Semperit UK Ltd.			X	X	X	X
Uniroyal Cup Ltd.	X	X	X	X	X	
Watts Tyre & Rubber Co. Ltd.	X	X			X	X
Sub-totals (excluding VAT) (£ million)	4·2	5·3	5·8	6·9	9·0	8·0

Companies awarded MOD contracts for aircraft tyres and tubes

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Dunlop	X	X	X	X	X	X
Goodyear Tyre & Rubber Co. Ltd.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sub-totals (excluding VAT) (£ million)	1·8	2·1	2·2	2·0	2·5	3·9
Grand totals (excluding VAT) (£ million)	6·0	7·4	8·0	8·9	11·5	11·9

In fact however about 75 per cent. by value of MOD's vehicle tyre offtake over the six-year period has been of United Kingdom manufacture, with other EEC countries supplying 20 per cent. and Scandinavia, United States of America, Morocco, Austria, Canada and the Far East, in descending order, sharing the remaining 5 per cent. In the period up to an including 1985 all the aircraft tyres purchased were manufactured in United Kingdom but Goodyear have advised that, for commercial considerations, requirements for 1986 and beyond will be met mainly from their plants in Europe.

NATO Ambassadors

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the next meeting of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation ambassadors is due to take place.

Mr. Stanley: There are regular meetings of both the North Atlantic Council and Defence Planning Committee in permanent session planned for later this week.

Trident D5 Weapon System

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value to date of the subcontracts placed with British firms for the United States Trident D5 weapon system.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest figure available shows the total value of awards on United Kingdom companies for the United States Trident D5 weapon system as around $43 million. This figure represents some 185 contracts let to over 50 companies.

Departmental Housing (Shoeburyness)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many houses owned by his Department are now vacant in the neighbourhood of the Ministry's establishement in Shoeburyness; and what plans he has for these properties.

Mr. Lee: There are 48 married quarters currently vacant at Shoeburyness which are held pending the outcome of studies of the future of Horseshoe barracks. We would welcome any formal approach regarding leasing by Southend council.

Experimental Aircraft Projects

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the potential benefits of the experimental aircraft projects programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The experimental aircraft programme is a technology demonstrator programme which will give practical experience in the integration of the wide range of new technolog ies required for new, sophisticated combat aircraft, including manufacture of large structural components in composite material, fly-by-wire technology and advanced avionics. The lessons learned from the programme will have application to many aspects of modern combat aircraft, including the European fighter aircraft.

Water Tank, Walker Drive, South Queensferry

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the state of repair of the water tank, the property of his Department, at Walker drive, South Queensferry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 April 1986, column *262*]: The water tank in question was sold by my Department along with other land in 1978 to the Lothian regional council. Its current condition is therefore a matter for that council or its successors.

WALES

Rates (Cardiff)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the losses in revenue from commercial rates suffered by councils covering the Cardiff, West constituency in 1975, 1980 and 1985.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Derelict Land

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much derelict land has been reclaimed by county area in Wales for each year from 1975 to 1985; how much funding was available for each year; and if in any year the sum was underspent.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Land reclamation schemes often involve works in more than one year. The following information is therefore provided on the basis of schemes approved to start in the years in question.

Since the Welsh Development Agency was given responsibility for the administration of land reclamation work on 1 January 1976, the agency has approved schemes to reclaim the following amounts of derelict land:

Acres

County	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*Total*
Clwyd	—	11	—	22	36	15	49	32	4	205	374
Dyfed	—	61	69	3	8	15	102	43	171	130	602
Gwent	213	929	140	115	71	64	185	103	36	40	1,896
Gwynedd	3	54	16	—	5	6	35	75	5	2	201
Mid Glamorgan	130	145	654	140	61	46	116	21	280	220	1,813
Powys	—	33	2	1	—	3	2	—	—	1	42
South Glamorgan	—	6	2	156	35	—	13	41	—	—	253
West Glamorgan	61	170	126	73	172	201	145	108	16	42	1,114
Total	407	1,409	1,009	510	388	350	647	423	512	640	6,295

The WDA's initial budget and outturn expenditure on land reclamation in each financial year is given below:

	£ million	
	Budget	*Outturn Expenditure*
1976-77	2·5	1·7
1977-78	9·0	6·0
1978-79	6·8	7·8
1979-80	8·8	7·5
1980-81	7·4	8·7
1981-82	9·2	10·5
1982-83	10·4	10·0
1983-84	13·0	11·2
1984-85	6·5	8·4
1985-86	9·0	10·4

In a number of years it has been necessary to switch funds to or from the agency's land reclamation budget during the course of the year. In each year all funds actually available for land reclamation have been spent.

Renovation Grants

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what action is being taken by his Department to encourage district councils to make greater use of building society funds to supplement renovation grants.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: We are actively considering ways of encouraging agency services to assist and advise homeowners as to the repair and maintenance of their homes, making full use of funds from building societies where appropriate. In particular we are financing a feasibility study for an agency project in the Cynon Valley which would be a collaborative venture between the local authority and a number of building societies. We shall also publish shortly a leaflet on block repair which encourages both homeowners and district councils to liaise with individual building societies or banks as potential sources of funding to supplement renovation grants.

Household Projections

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what are the latest projections by age for the numbers of heads of households in Wales in *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1991, *(c)* 1996 and *(d)* 2001; and what is the estimate for 1983 in the age groups (i) 15 to 29 years, (ii) 30 to 44 years, (iii) 45 to 64 years and (iv) 65 years and over;

(2) what are the latest household projections for Wales by type for 1991, and 2001; and what were the estimates for 1983.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is published in the "1983 Based Household Projections for Counties of Wales", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Homeless Persons

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many homeless persons there are in each local authority area in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information on the number currently homeless is not held centrally. However, the number of persons accepted as homeless in each local authority during 1985 is given in the following table:

Numbers accepted as homeless

Welsh districts	*Numbers*
Clwyd:	
Alyn and Deeside	427
Colwyn	71
Delyn	297
Glyndwr	64
Rhuddlan	242
Wrexham Maelor	411
Dyfed:	
Carmarthen	218
Ceredigion	149
Dinefwr	104
Llanelli	227
Preseli	148
South Pembrokeshire	224
Gwent:	
Blaenau Gwent	447
Islwyn	139
Monmouth	717
Newport	1,513
Torfaen	531
Gwynedd:	
Abeconwy	74
Arfon	62
Dwyfor	126
Meironnydd	106
Ynys Môn	50
Mid Glamorgan:	
Cynon Valley	840
Merthyr Tydfil	225
Ogwr	826
Rhondda	317
Rhymney Valley	629
Taff-Ely	186
Powys:	
Brecknock	217
Montgomery	52
Radnor	54
South Glamorgan:	
Cardiff	1,646
Vale of Glamorgan	570
West Glamorgan:	
Lliw valley	158
Neath	806
Port Talbot	164
Swansea	762
Wales Total	13,799

Housing Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are on waiting lists for council accommodation in each of the local authority areas in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many council-owned houses have been sold by each local authority in Wales in each year since 1980.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of council-owned houses sold by each local authority in Wales in each year since 1980 is shown in the following table:

Local authority dwellings sold 1980 to 1985

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Clwyd						
Alyn and Deeside	298	200	191	78	68	79
Colwyn	89	82	86	68	56	64
Delyn	384	298	326	88	66	64
Glyndwr	—	160	272	170	79	56
Rhuddlan	—	80	154	143	64	34
Wrexham Maelor	—	297	654	207	129	163
Dyfed						
Carmarthen	28	290	198	109	103	76
Ceredigion	85	123	320	129	94	72
Dinefwr	—	46	204	61	55	55
Llanelli	—	546	507	447	341	238
Preseli	3	383	451	167	128	109
South Pembrokeshire	74	61	140	150	63	48
Gwent						
Blaenau Gwent	—	261	340	201	100	99
Islwyn	—	237	1,034	689	230	188
Monmouth	308	191	252	207	153	158
Newport	70	509	572	423	312	389
Torfaen	—	497	461	382	303	221
Gwynedd						
Aberconwy	—	182	419	207	94	88
Arfon	—	294	202	142	82	77
Dwyfor	—	41	107	48	20	29
Meirionnydd	—	32	266	141	54	64
Ynys Môn	—	192	307	118	58	94
Mid Glamorgan						
Cynon Valley	—	122	405	120	97	76
Merthyr Tydfil	—	127	510	198	108	153
Ogwr	—	213	1,074	545	307	374
Rhondda	—	102	82	34	26	50
Rhymney Valley	1	262	954	432	275	201
Taff-Ely	35	289	531	447	294	286
Powys						
Brecknock	—	307	204	123	117	100
Montgomery	—	292	299	120	83	69
Radnor	—	63	139	88	50	35
South Glamorgan						
Cardiff	16	293	1,448	837	567	630
Vale of Glamorgan	391	375	418	330	225	223
West Glamorgan						
Afan (Port Talbot)	23	140	417	595	349	308
Lliw Valley	—	194	482	144	83	124
Neath	—	439	459	167	120	129
Swansea	37	274	422	289	139	213
Wales Total (Local authority)	1,842	8,494	15,307	8,844	5,492	5,436
Cwmbran	305	327	1,123	488	332	276
Newtown	—	12	13	27	9	11
Wales Total (All)	2,147	8,833	16,443	9,359	5,833	5,723

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses are owned by each local authority in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of houses owned by each local authority in Wales at 1 April 1985, is given in the following table:

Local Authority Stock	*Total Dwellings*
Aberconwy	3,277
Alyn and Deeside	5,624
Arfon	5,358
Blaenau Gwent	11,147
Brecknock	3,173
Cardiff	22,874
Carmarthen	3,779
Ceredigion	3,882
Colwyn	2,939
Cynon Valley	5,735
Delyn	5,183
Dinefwr	2,846
Dwyfor	1,510
Glyndŵr	3,334
Islwyn	7,024
Llanelli	7,721

Local Authority Stock	Total Dwellings
Lliw Valley	5,536
Meirionnydd	2,320
Merthyr Tydfil	7,695
Monmouth	5,452
Montgomery	3,287
Neath	6,544
Newport	14,340
Ogwr	11,141
Port Talbot	7,381
Preseli	6,283
Radnor	1,298
Rhondda	5,159
Rhuddlan	2,897
Rhymney Valley	11,089
South Pembrokeshire	3,166
Swansea	19,048
Taff-Ely	9,199
Torfaen	8,503
Vale of Glamorgan	7,203
Wrexham Maelor	16,951
Ynys Môn	6,180
Wales	256,078

Source: Housing Investment Programme returns.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses have been built by each local authority in Wales in each year since 1980.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of houses built by each local authority in Wales in each year since 1980 is shown in the following table:

Local Authority Housebuilding: Completions

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Clwyd:						
Alyn and Deeside	32	52	50	86	39	30
Colwyn	109	81	—	50	24	—
Delyn	39	10	7	—	—	—
Glyndwr	13	114	43	23	4	—
Rhuddlan	57	25	37	40	59	24
Wrexham Maelor	42	113	69	62	61	66
Dyfed:						
Carmarthen	66	55	61	132	46	28
Ceredigion	48	113	86	—	165	—
Dinefwr	54	52	2	22	55	16
Llanelli	34	78	26	42	—	67
Presli	62	3	16	—	—	—
South Pembrokeshire	65	—	—	6	1	20
Gwent:						
Blaenau Gwent	331	366	67	—	30	48
Islwyn	26	119	44	25	64	21
Monmouth	93	6	80	71	59	107
Newport	85	285	172	43	169	67
Torfaen	155	43	48	83	38	31
Gwynedd:						
Aberconwy	—	123	—	38	—	20
Arfon	31	19	46	4	28	9
Dwyfor	30	27	6	5	—	9
Meirionnydd	54	51	16	33	12	—
Ynys Mon	198	81	59	41	84	18
Mid Glamorgan:						
Cynon Valley	40	—	14	—	40	—
Merthyr Tydfil	217	154	12	7	9	—
Ogwr	131	201	79	9	60	139
Rhondda	161	115	27	—	—	—
Rhymney Valley	169	160	57	73	79	30
Taff-Ely	226	110	62	85	90	—
Powys:						
Brecknock	49	—	30	24	14	12
Montgomeryshire	47	41	11	15	41	—
Radnor	30	20	20	—	69	10
South Glamorgan:						
Cardiff	443	367	240	310	344	107
Vale of Glamorgan	69	124	49	24	20	18
West Glamorgan:						
Port Talbot	—	24	—	—	—	—
Lliw Valley	124	132	91	90	111	22
Neath	56	43	18	71	76	16
Swansea	107	63	126	29	105	57
Cwmbran	158	102	89	169	93	81

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Newtown	51	58	15	26	62	—
Wales Total	3,702	3,530	1,875	1,738	2,151	1,073

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses have been bought from the private sector to enable them to be let to council tenants by each local authority in Wales since 1980.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of houses acquired by each local authority in Wales since 1980 is shown in the following table. It is not known what proportion of these have been bought from the private sector, or the number which will subsequently be let to council tenants.

Numbers of dwellings acquired 1980-85

Welsh Districts	Numbers
Aberconwy	12
Alyn and Deeside	3
Arfon	29
Blaenau Gwent	1
Brecknock	—
Cardiff	10
Carmarthen	40
Ceredigion	14
Colwyn	—
Cynon Valley	—
Delyn	1
Dinefwr	4
Dwyfor	19
Glyndŵr	—
Islwyn	11
Llanelli	—
Lliw Valley	2
Meirionnydd	24
Merthyr Tydfil	—
Monmouth	—
Montgomeryshire	—
Neath	37
Newport	17
Ogwr	—
Port Talbot (Afan)	1
Preseli	7
Radnor	—
Rhondda	3
Rhuddlan	1
Rhymney Valley	—
South Pembrokeshire	1
Swansea	13
Taff-Ely	14
Torfaen	18
Vale of Glamorgan	1
Wrexham Maelor	22
Ynys Môn	20
Wales Total	325

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many homes within each of the local authorities in Wales are second houses or holiday homes; and what percentage they represent of the housing stock.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of second and holiday homes in each local authority area, as recorded by the 1981 "Census of Population", is given in the following table:

Second and holiday homes as a percentage of total housing stock

Authority	Second and holiday homes	Total as a percentage of stock
Aberconwy	1,913	8·5
Alyn and Deeside	62	0·2
Arfon	993	4·5
Blaenau Gwent	43	0·1
Brecknock	496	3·1
Cardiff	51	0
Carmarthen	547	2·7
Ceredigion	1,915	7·5
Colwyn	777	3·6
Cynon Valley	36	0·1
Delyn	335	1·4
Dinefwr	263	1·8
Dwyfor	2,579	19·6
Glyndŵr	723	4·4
Islwyn	18	0·1
Llanelli	76	0·3
Lliw Valley	35	0·1
Meirionnydd	3,023	18·6
Merthyr Tydfil	18	0·1
Monmouth	214	0·8
Montgomery	907	4·6
Neath	31	0·1
Newport	35	0·1
Ogwr	155	0·3
Port Talbot	12	0·1
Preseli	1,686	6·1
Radnor	396	4·4
Rhondda	16	0·1
Rhuddlan	783	3·6
Rhymney Valley	31	0·1
South Pembrokeshire	1,612	9·8
Swansea	618	0·9
Taff-Ely	18	0·1
Torfaen	35	0·1
Vale of Glamorgan	47	0·1
Wrexham Maelor	119	0·3
Ynys Môn	1,997	7·2
Wales Total	22,615	2·1

NORTHERN IRELAND

Breast Cancer

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate by age group *(a)* the number of women diagnosed as having breast cancer in Northern Ireland in each of the past three years, *(b)* the number of those who have been, or are being successfully treated and *(c)* the number of those who have died due to the cancer.

Mr. Needham: This information is not available in the precise form requested. Table A shows the number of new cases of malignant neoplasm of the female breast registered with the Northern Ireland cancer registration scheme for 1982, 1983 and 1984. Table B shows the number of deaths registered in these years with the general register office, where this disease was the principal cause of death. In view of known deficiencies in the data from the Northern Ireland cancer registration scheme and the variation in time between a case being registered and a

death occurring, statistics on deaths in a year should not be directly associated with new cases registered for that year.

It is not possible to provide information concerning the number of those who have been, or are being, successfully treated for this disease.

Table A
New Cases of Malignant Neoplasm of Female Breast Registered for 1982, 1983 and 1984

Year	*0-14*	*15-24*	*25-34*	*35-44*	*45-54*	*55-64*	*65-74*	*75+*	*All ages*
1982	—	—	9	63	123	130	124	118	567
1983	1	—	15	60	115	162	132	105	590
1984	1	2	20	71	103	129	98	124	548

Table B
Deaths registered from Malignant Neoplasm of Female Breast in 1982, 1983 and 1984

Year	*0-14*	*15-24*	*25-34*	*35-44*	*45-54*	*55-64*	*65-74*	*75+*	*All ages*
1982	—	—	4	24	45	54	69	71	267
1983	—	—	2	16	44	78	54	88	282
1984	—	—	8	24	46	79	67	78	302

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the Government have any plans *(a)* to increase the availability or use of mammography in Northern Ireland or *(b)* to introduce a comprehensive breast screening programme with appropriate resources for diagnosis, further investigation, treatment and support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Government will decide their policy on the provision of a comprehensive breast cancer screening programme when they receive the final report of an expert working group chaired by Sir Patrick Forrest, which is examining the options available for the introduction of screening by mammography and the benefits and costs associated with them. The working group report is expected later this year.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining the current provision in Northern Ireland of breast cancer screening; and how this compares with such provision in Great Britain.

Mr. Needham: In Northern Ireland and Great Britain women are encouraged through health education to examine their own breasts and report any abnormalities to their doctors. A Health Education Council leaflet giving guidance on how breast self-examination should be carried out is widely available.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the general trend in the levels of numbers of serving members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary about whom recruitment inquiries have been made by police forces in Great Britain in the past three years.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Armagh Prison

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why workmen are working overtime during weekends at the former Armagh prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 May 1986, c. *249*]: As part of the contingency plans for dealing with possible disruption of the prison system as a result of industrial action, work was required at Armagh prison to make it ready to hold prisoners again if necessary. In the very limited time available week-end working was necessary on 26-27 April.

Maze Prison

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why there has been a recent change in policy to combine the compound and cellular sections of Her Majesty's prison, the Maze; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, of 9 May 1986, c. *250*]: In 1985 the prospective opening of the new prisons at Maghaberry led to a wide-ranging review of the prison system in Northern Ireland. One of the conclusions reached was that the significantly reduced number of special category prisoners in the Maze compound prison made its administration as a separate entity increasingly unviable. It was therefore decided that the residue of the compound prison should be managed as an annexe of the main cellular prison and the two were formally amalgamated under the control of one governor with effect from 1 April 1986. Progress is being made toward the integration of common functions, and this process is expected to continue for some time.

ENVIRONMENT

Rates

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what evidence he has of the impact of increased rates on businesses both nationally and in Leicester;

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact of the increase in rates in Leicester on the profitability and viability of knitting manufacturers in the Leicester area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have no doubt that the excessive rates imposed by some councils, including the 35 per cent. rise in the general rate in Leicester this year, can have serious consequences for the local economy and for

employment opportunities. This will apply to knitting manufacturers as to any other business. We have published proposals for a national non-domestic rate in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" which will remove such economically damaging variations in business rates.

Radiation

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department is taking, following the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in the Ukraine, to check that the seas, forests and rivers of the United Kingdom are not polluted and that wildlife and fish life are not affected; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Preliminary assessments suggest that the doses of radiation likely to be sustained by wildlife and fish are well below the levels that would be likely to cause harm to them or the seas, forests and rivers of the United Kingdom.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is proposed that any rdioactive waste arising from Sellafield should be disposed of at sites other than Drigg up to year 2030.

Mrs. Rumbold: Provided UK NIREX Ltd develops a new disposal site in the mid-1990s there will be adequate capacity at Drigg for all low-level wastes from Sellafield until after 2030. NIREX has been asked to look at possible sites for deep disposal of intermediate-level wastes, much of which could come from Sellafield. Government policy is to store high-level waste for 50 years.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his decision that NIREX nuclear dumps will contain only low-level nuclear waste precludes their use for storage of nuclear materials from nuclear submarines.

Mrs. Rumbold: A NIREX site will be used primarily for disposal, not storage, although some short-term storage may take place as a prelude to disposal. A site may receive some wastes from decommissioned nuclear submarines.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he held with NIREX before announcing that NIREX nuclear dumps would take only low-level waste; what proposals he now has for dealing with intermediate level waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The decision to restrict what goes into a near-surface site was discussed with NIREX in one of the regular meetings my Department and NIREX have to discuss issues that are within our respective responsibilities. NIREX is exploring the options of disposing of intermediate level waste in a deep cavity underground or under the sea bed, or in a mine tunnelled out under the sea bed from the shore.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many delegations he has received to date, and from which areas, local authorities and organisations, on the proposal for nuclear dumping and the related special development orders.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since the announcement of potential disposal sites on 25 February, my right hon. Friends and I, together or separately, have met representatives of the following bodies: county and district councils from Bedfordshire, Humberside and Lincolnshire; Essex county council; and Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire Against Nuclear Dumping. We have also met representatives of parish councils. I am today holding separate meetings with deputations from Bedfordshire Against Nuclear Dumping and Humberside Against Nuclear Dumping. My hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government will be meeting representatives of Maldon district council, Maldon Against Nuclear Dumping and parish councils around Bradwell on 15 May.

Women's Aid

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government have plans to increase funding to Women's Aid refuges; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The funding of Women's Aid refuges is primarily a matter for local authorities or other sponsors. There are no plans to increase support for Women's Aid refuges through Government programmes.

Gipsies

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received in response to his review of gipsy site policy.

Mr. Tracey: Some 65 separate responses to consultation have been received, including responses from the local authority associations and other organisations consulted by the Department last December. The responses are being examined.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total public expenditure on housing in the United Kingdom as a proportion of the gross domestic product in each year from 1976 to the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) what was the total private expenditure on housing in the United Kingdom as a proportion of the gross domestic product in each year from 1976 to the latest year for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Kenwood House

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date English Heritage first sought information from the Greater London council about staffing levels, salaries and details as to whether staff at Kenwood House wished to transfer their employment from the Greater London council to English Heritage; and on what date the full information was supplied.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission formally requested details of GLC staff on 29 April 1985. A reply in respect of staff working at, or in connection, with the historic house museums, including Kenwood house, was not received until 4 March 1986.

Nuclear Accidents (Evacuation)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans have been made for the evacuation of local inhabitants in the event of a nuclear accident in Britain.

Mr. Goodlad: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply of 9 May at column *269* to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce).

TRANSPORT

Space Saver Spare Wheels

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport what inquiries he is currently making into the safety aspects of the space saver spare wheel.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has carried out tests. We are satisfied that temporary use spare tyres now available are safe if used in accordance with manufacturers' instructions and at a speed not in excess of 50 mph. The Department has invited comments on draft regulations to clarify the legal use of the these tyres, and to require new vehicles equipped with them to meet the requirements of EEC regulation 64.

Bus Services

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will compile and make available to interested parties a list of the procedures to be adopted, including the requirements on bus stops, timetabling, fare structures and concessionary passes, vehicle maintenance, any financial incentives available and the names and addresses of all relevant authorities for a new entrant wishing to provide an innovatory bus service; if he will include in the list any difference in procedure as between areas formerly covered by the metropolitan county counties, shire councils and city-based transport systems; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to promote the opportunities available for new entrants who wish to provide a bus service; if he will include in such plans advertising, a step by step guide including funds available and the procedures to be adopted in registering a service and the availability of promotional literature and booklets from Government bookshops, libraries and town halls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department has already published a guide for bus operators on the new procedures introduced by the Transport Act 1985, and in particular the arrangements for registering services, which are the same for all areas outside London. It has also published a series of explanatory leaflets on different aspects of the 1985 Act, and it will shortly be making available a further leaflet on the opportunities for new bus operators, together with a booklet with more detailed information. I am sending my hon. Friend copies and all these publications can be obtained free from traffic area offices, or from the Department at 2 Marsham Street, London SW1. I believe that they provide most of the information mentioned by my hon. Friend, but I welcome suggestions as to what further steps we might take.

London Regional Transport

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of people using London Regional Trasport *(a)* buses, and *(b)* Underground for each year from 1976; and what are the projected figures for each year from 1986 to 1990.

Mr. David Mitchell: Figures for past years are published in annual reports of London Regional Transport (formerly the London Transport Executive) and are as follows:

Passenger journeys *millions*

	1976	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984**	*1984-85†*	*1985-86‡*
Bus	1,423	1,373	1,301	1,234	1,183	1,080	1,042	1,090	1,160	1,160	1,150
Underground	546	546	569	594	559	541	498	563	651	672	750

* Calendar year
† Fiscal year
‡ Provisional

Projected figures for future years are not available.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether there are any plans to introduce onto London Underground trains an intercom system for passengers to alert London Regional Transport staff if in danger.

Mr. David Mitchell: An intercom system of this kind will be one of the features of the new prototype trains currently under construction and due to be tested in passenger service.

The need for such measures is also one of the questions being examined in the study of crime on the Underground.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many jobs have been lost both directly and indirectly as a result of London Buses Ltd. converting their bus operations to one person operations for *(a)* women and *(b)* men for each year since 1976; and what are the projected figures for each year from 1986 to 1990;

(2) what was the total number of Underground staff, excluding guards and drivers, employed by London Transport and London Regional Transport for each year from 1976; and what are the projected figures for each year from 1986 to 1990;

(3) what was the total number of guards employed by London Transport and London Regional Transport on the Underground for each year from 1976; and what are the project figures for each year from 1986 to 1990;

(4) what were the total numbers of *(a)* female and *(b)* male conductors employed by London Transport or London Buses Ltd. for each year from 1976; and what are the projected figures for each year from 1986 to 1990;

(5) how many *(a)* female and *(b)* male former conductors have (i) successfully retrained and (ii) failed their retraining as London bus drivers on one person operated buses each year since the scheme's inception.

Mr. David Mitchell: These are matters for London Regional Transport and its operating subsidiaries.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many stations on London's Underground have had closed circuit television for each of the past five years; and how many will have it by 1990.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to my replies given on Friday 9 May 1986 to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), at column 287, on the subject of closed circuit television.

The Department does not hold any further information. The future extension of closed circuit television is being considered as part of the study of crime on the Underground.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the incidence of assaults on London Transport or London Regional Transport staff on *(a)* the Underground and *(b)* buses for each year since 1976.

Mr. David Mitchell: The total number of assaults reported by London Regional Transport operating staff for each year since 1976 is as follows:

	Underground	*Buses*
1976	209	1,062
1977	273	1,248
1978	238	1,118
1979	291	1,039
1980	297	1,123
1981	258	1,007
1982	317	1,228
1983	300	1,157
1984	286	1,250
1985	364	1,358

These statistics do not distinguish between minor assaults and more violent attacks.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total of security police employed by London Transport or London Regional Transport on the Underground for each year since 1976; and what are the projected figures for each year from 1986 to 1990.

Mr. David Mitchell: The average number of British Transport police officers deployed on the Underground since 1975 is as follows:

	Number
1976	130
1977	121
1978	141
1979	139
1980	161
1981	270
1982	284
1983	284
1984	248
1985	267

It is intended that the number of officers will rise to 350 by March 1987.

Policing levels is one of the issues currently being examined in the study of crime on the Underground. It is not possible at present to predict future policing levels beyond 1987, nor would I wish to pre-empt the findings of the study by attempting to do so.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans Her Majesty's Government have to improve the safety of passengers using the London Underground.

Mr. David Mitchell: The safety of passengers using the London Underground is the responsibility of London Regional Transport. However, as the hon. Member is aware, the Department is currently conducting a study of crime on the Underground in conjunction with LRT, the Home Office, the British Transport police and the Metropolitan police. I would not wish to pre-empt the findings of the study by making any further comment at present.

I understand that London Regional Transport is also in the process of conducting separate researches in passenger safety and security.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the incidence of attacks on passengers on the London Underground for *(a)* women and *(b)* men for each year since 1976; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Information from LRT shows that the incidence of attacks (including cases of robbery, sexual assault and other criminal assault) during the period 1976 to 1984 was as follows:

	Number
1976	277
1977	392
1978	470
1979	530
1980	689
1981	806
1982	811
1983	797
1984	1,176

An analysisis by sex is not available for these years. The data for 1985 are still being assembled and a special analysis to establish the sex of the victim will be undertaken. I shall write to the Home Member when the figures become available.

Motorways (Service Areas)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria his Department uses for determining whether service areas should be provided on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The general policy is to provide motorway service areas at approximately 30-mile intervals so that travellers may remain on the motorway.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made in reaching agreement within the European Economic Community on a harmonised marking scheme for the carriage and storage of hazardous substances.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Harmonisation of the requirements for labelling hazardous substances for international carriage by road, rail, sea and air is being accomplished on the basis of recommendations by the United Nations

Committee of Experts on the transport of dangerous goods. The European Economic Community recognises these recommendations.

Fishing Vessels (Distress Beacons)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Transport how long a traditional period he proposes to allow fishing vessels which have installed 121 MHz distress beacons to obtain full use of them before being required to fit 406 MHz equipment.

Mr. Ridley: No decision has yet been taken. There will be consultation with the fishing industry before any regulations are made requiring the use of 406 MHZ equipment. The consultations will cover the question of transitional use of 121½ MHZ equipment.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the most recent figures for spending per school pupil in schools in the United Kingdom; and what information he has about the equivalent figures for France, Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Dunn: The available information is shown in the following table. For international comparisons non-advanced further education is included with secondary education at the 2nd level.

Expenditure per pupil at 1983 values (£) [1]

	Pre 1st level [2]	*1st level* [3]	*2nd level* [4]	*Average cost up to and including 2nd level*
France [5]	433	523	932	676
Japan [6]	156	854	938	824
United States of America [7]	*	*	*	1,465
United Kingdom [8]	842 (647)	814	1,209	1,025 (1,010)

* Not available.

[1] Expenditure per pupil in foreign currencies were converted to £ sterling at 1983 values by applying Purchasing Power Parity factors. These allow for exchange rates and differences in the cost of living between countries.

[2] Equates broadly with nursery education.

[3] Equates broadly with primary (compulsory) education.

[4] Equates broadly with secondary school education and non-advanced further education.

[5] 1980 data at 1983 values. Based on head counts. Approximately 86 per cent. of 3-5 year olds attend part-time.

[6] 1982 data at 1983 values. Excludes public subsidies to private sector. Based on head counts.

[7] 1981 data at 1983 values. Includes capital expenditure and special education. Based on head counts. Approximately 84 per cent. of 3-5 year olds attend part-time.

[8] Rates based on full-time equivalent pupil/student numbers. Figures in brackets are based on pre-school pupil head counts. Excludes private sector schools and colleges.

Source: United Kingdom—Department of Education and Science
Other countries—UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1985.

Universities and Public Sector Institutions

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of total recurrent income of *(a)* universities and *(b)* public sector institutions was covered by private sources of finance from 1970 and in each year to the latest available date.

Mr. Walden: The proportion of universities' general income covered by private sources of finance for the academic years 1970-71 to 1983-84 was as follows:

Year	*Percentage*
1970-71	8·1
1971-72	7·6
1972-73	7·2
1973-74	7·2
1974-75	7·8
1975-76	7·9
1976-77	8·2
1977-78	10·1
1978-79	10·6
1979-80	10·5
1980-81	11·0
1981-82	12·4
1982-83	13·3
1983-84	15·0

The increase between 1980-81 and 1981-82 and subsequent years is in part the result of accounting changes.

This information is not available for public sector institutions.

Higher Education

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in tabular form for each year from 1970 to the latest available date the number of students and the proportion of the total in higher education represented by *(a)* those in universities, *(b)* those in public sector institutions, *(c)* those studying science or technology, *(d)* those studying the humanities, *(e)* those studying full time, *(f)* those studying part time and *(g)* students from abroad.

Mr. Walden: Detailed information on student numbers in higher education in Great Britain was published in July 1985, in statistical bulletin 9/85, a copy of which is in the Library. It is proposed to issue an updated bulletin later this year.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in tabular form the number of female students in higher education in each year from 1970 to the latest available date and list these figures as a percentage of the total number of students in each year.

Mr. Walden: The information is shown in the following table:

Full-time and sandwich students in higher education in Great Britain*

	Women (000s)	*Percentage of all students*
1970	163·3	36·6
1971	184·9	39·9
1972	191·0	40·4
1973	182·7	38·0
1974	201·8	41·5
1975	208·2	41·3
1976	208·4	40·6
1977	202·4	39·8
1978	198·5	39·2
1979	202·5	39·7
1980	210·1	40·3
1981	222·0	40·9
1982	231·4	41·8
1983	239·0	42·3
1984	246·3	43·0

* Including students from abroad.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in tabular form the number of mature students in higher education in each year from 1970 to the latest available date and list these figures as a percentage of the total number of students in each year.

Mr. Walden: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply given on 23 April at column 150. Information on earlier years for Great Britain universities, including that on students from abroad, are shown in the following table; similar information for public sector higher education is not readily available.

	Students aged 21 or over (000s)	*Mature students as a percentage of all students*
1970	108·2	47·5
1971	110·9	47·2
1972	99·4	41·5
1973	101·8	41·7
1974	105·6	42·2
1975	110·9	42·4
1976	115·0	42·3
1977	116·2	41·4
1978	118·3	41·0
1979	118·0	40·3

1. Postgraduate ages are at 31 December.
2. Undergraduate ages for 1970 and 1971 are as at 31 December, all other years are as at 31 August.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in tabular form the number of students in higher education from families in social groups C2 and DE in each year from 1970 to the latest available date and list these figures as a percentage of the total number of students in each year.

Mr. Walden: The proportions of home university students accepted through the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA) from social groups III M (Skilled Occupations—Manual), IV (Partly Skilled Occupations), and V (Unskilled Occupations) since 1977 were as follows. Similar figures are neither available for earlier years, nor for students in public sector higher education.

Year	*III M (000s)*	*Per cent.**	*IV and V (000s)*	*Per cent.**
1977	10·7	16·6	4·1	6·4
1978	10·6	16·1	4·2	6·4
1979	11·3	16·3	4·1	6·0
1980	10·1	14·0	3·9	5·4
1981	8·2	12·3	3·4	5·2
1982	8·0	12·2	3·8	5·8
1983	7·8	12·4	4·4	7·1
1984	8·1	12·4	4·8	7·3

* Percentage of those of known social class only.

Computers

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with suppliers of super computers other than from the United States of America about he possible supply of such computers to United Kingdom educational and research institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: A working party under the chairmanship by Professor A. J. Forty of the University of Warwick considered the technical solutions offered by Japanese as well as by United States suppliers for providing the academic community with facilities for advanced research computing. The Department, through the Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils, is also in contact with United Kingdom and overseas suppliers who may be able to offer computing equipment that will form the basis of the next generation of supercomputers or provide alternative systems for meeting the advanced computing requirements of educational and research institutions. In particular a group under the chairmanship of Professor E. B. Spratt of the University of Kent is examining the technical options for providing distributed high performance systems. Two specific developments are already in hand. First, Edinburgh University has been chosen as the first United Kingdom site to receive a British-built "Meiko Computing Surface", a machine providing advanced graphics capability based on chips designed and manufactured by the British company Inmos. Second, a distributed array processor supplied by the United Kingdom company International Computers Limited has been installed at Queen Mary College, London, and discussions are taking place with the company about other advanced developments.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Trial Nuclear Test Ban

33. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to introduce a trial test ban in consultation with other nuclear powers.

Mr. Renton: We have no plans to do so. We do not believe that a trial test ban would contribute towards the balanced and verifiable arms control agreements which are essential for our security.

Prisoners of Conscience

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has received since the beginning of March seeking information about four Ukrainian women prisoners of conscience, Iryna Ratushynska, Sophia Bilyak, Olena Hermaniuk, and Olha Matusevych, from *(a)* Members of

Parliament and *(b)* members of the public; and whether those who have made representations to him in writing have yet received replies.

Mr. Renton: Since the beginning of March my right hon. and learned Friend has received 16 representations from right hon. and hon. Members referring to these four cases, to which replies have been sent. He has also received more than 1,000 printed circulars listing the four cases, sent by members of the public on behalf of the Association of Ukrainian Women, and has acknowledged these in a reply to the president of the association. In addition, and within the same time scale, my right hon. and learned Friend has received some 160 representations from right hon. and hon. Members and some 60 representations from members of the public which refer solely to the case of Irina Ratushinskaya. Most of these have already received replies, and the remainder will receive them shortly.

Soviet Nuclear Accident

Mr. Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 7 May, *Official Report*, column *194*, what is Her Majesty's Government's advice about precautions to be taken by British citizens for whom it is absolutely necessary to travel to those areas of the Soviet Union which travellers are currently being advised to avoid.

Mr. Eggar: The following precautions are advisable:

Avoid fresh milk and free-range eggs.

Surface-grown vegetables should preferably be avoided and in any event washing-peeled.

Fruit should be peeled.

It is safe to drink tap water and eat meat and poultry and other foods.

Anything tinned, frozen or preserved before the 26 April is safe.

Sinai Multinational Force

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government decided to renew their commitment to the Sinai multinational force and observers when it expired on 20 April.

Mr. Renton: The multinational force and observers has been informed by means of an exchange of notes, which will be published in due course in the treaty series, that the United Kingdom's participation in the MFO will be continued for an additional period of one year beginning on 21 April 1986. Our participation will continue for a further period of one year thereafter unless Her Majesty's Government decide to inform the MFO at least 90 days prior to the expiry of the initial one year term of the United Kingdom's intention to terminate its participation.

EMPLOYMENT

Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Freeman asked the Paymaster General if he will give the latest number of enterprise agencies in active existence.

Mr. Trippier: There are currently 336 local enterprise agencies in active existence in the United Kingdom, of which 246 meet the requirements of the Finance Act 1982, which allows business sector sponsors tax relief on their contributions to such bodies.

Industrial Language Training Centre

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General how many people in the Bolton area have been trained through the Industrial Language Training Centre *(a)* since 1978 and *(b)* during 1984-85.

Mr. Trippier: Since 1978, 1,797 people in the Bolton area have been trained by the Industrial Language Training Centre. This figure includes people trained up to March 1986. In 1984-85, 735 people were trained in the centre.

Community Programme

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about capital funding for the community programme.

Mr. Lang: In addition to wages, the running costs of community programme projects are reimbursed, up to a maximum of £440 per annum for each place provided. This sum is intended to cover any necessary purchases of capital equipment. In many cases, community programme agents and sponsors provide additional funds for the purchase of capital equipment, either from their own resources or in appropriate cases through grants available under the urban programme or project grants from the Department of Energy.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Paymaster General, when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the development of the community programme.

Mr. Lang: I and ministerial colleagues regularly meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the commission's work, including the community programme. The next meeting will be held on 19 May.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Greenway asked the Paymaster General what were the numbers of people in work in 1970, 1975, 1980 and in each year since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

Employed Labour Force in Great Britain

December of each year	*Numbers*
1970	24,183,000
1975	24,342,000
1980	24,204,000
1983	23,339,000
1984	23,730,000
1985*	24,006,000

* The latest date for which an estimate is available.

The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and Her Majesty's forces. The figures are adjusted for seasonal variation.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Paymaster General what is the present number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who are unemployed and under the age of 21 years.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. On 9 January 1986, the latest date for which an analysis

of unemployment by age is available, the numbers of unemployed male and female claimants in the United Kingdom aged under 20 years were 307,901 and 220,906 respectively. Information is not separately available for those under the age of 21 years.

Greater London (Manufacturing Jobs)

Mr. Dubs asked the Paymaster General how many manufacturing jobs there are in Greater London; and what was the comparable number in 1979.

Mr. Lang: The Department's employment statistics are analysed according to the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification, and estimates on this basis for Greater London are not separately available for dates prior to September 1981. Comparable estimates for Greater London based on the 1968 SIC are available from censuses of employment held in June 1978 and September 1981. These, together with those for December 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, are given in the following table. As there are slight differences in the definition of manufacturing industries under the 1968 and 1980 versions of the SIC, the figures for September 1981 are given on both bases for comparison.

Employees in Employment in Manufacturing Industries in Greater London

	*1968	*1980
June 1978	769,000	—
September 1981	681,000	686,000
December 1985	—	573,000

* Standard Industrial Classification.

Tourism

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Paymaster General what recent representations he has received about obstacles to the development of tourism.

Mr. Trippier: I receive frequent representations about obstacles to the development of tourism covering a wide range of issues. The report "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs: The Business of Tourism" published last July focused on obstacles the Government could remove and recommended improved co-ordination between Government Departments. My right hon. and noble Friend now chairs regular meetings of colleagues with tourism-related responsibilities and arrangements to improve coordination of policies at regional level are also in place.

Mr. Coombs asked the Paymaster General what information he has on tourist travel to the United Kingdom since the United States attack on Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I am aware of reports that there have been cancellations of both leisure and business trips from North America due to fears of terrorism and fully appreciate the concern this has caused to the tourist industry. I can assure my hon. Friend that we are doing all we can to reassure potential American visitors that Britain is a safe destination.

The United States ambassador to this country has recently advised his fellow countrymen to come here and enjoy themselves, confident that they will be safe and appreciated. I very much welcome these remarks and hope that they will be widely heeded in the United States.

Redundancy Fund

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General what was the total number of payments made and the total amount paid from the redundancy fund in Great Britain for each year since 1979.

Mr. Trippier: The total number of payments made from the redundancy fund in each of the financial years 1979-80 to 1985-86, and the amount of money relating to those payments, are set out below:

Financial year	*Number of payments made*	*Amount paid from redundancy fund £ million*
1979-80	316,083	125·3
1980-81	675,906	305·2
1981-82	862,605	453·6
1982-83	747,768	428·4
1983-84	658,383	427·3
1984-85	492,354	333·0
1985-86	517,953	351·9

These payments include rebates to employers of part of the statutory redundancy payments they have made to their employees, redundancy payments made by the Department to employees when their employer has defaulted on the payment and payments made by the Department to employees to settle certain debts such as arrears of pay owed to them by insolvent employers.

Disabled Persons (Employment Initiatives)

Mr. Watts asked the Paymaster General how many schemes have been approved under the Manpower Services Commission scheme for pilot employment initiatives for disabled people; what funds have been allocated; and how many jobs are estimated to be provided.

Mr. Lang: A contract for one project has been placed, and so far four other projects have been approved in principle. The cost of the five projects to the Manpower Services Commission is estimated to be £180,000 over three years.

The scheme is designed to encourage and enable voluntary organisations to place disabled people into jobs elsewhere. The two projects which have specified the number of placings they aim to achieve expect to place some 65 people over the first three years. And the five projects so far approved will employ directly nine people.

Power Stations (Asbestos)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Paymaster General what health checks take place on people who have worked with asbestos in power stations during their working life; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Power station workers generally are not significantly exposed to asbestos, but exposure can occur during large-scale operations such as demolition. All employees, including those in power stations, who work with asbestos insulation and coating are subject to the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations and have two-yearly statutory medical examinations for so long as they are employed on asbestos work.

Mines and Quarries Inspectorate

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Paymaster General (1) if he is satisfied with the frequency of visits to coal mines by the Mines and Quarries Inspectorate; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he is satisfied with the current staffing levels of the Mines and Quarries Inspectorate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I am satisfied both with the current staffing levels of the Mines and Quarries Inspectorate and with the frequency of visits to coal mines by Mines and Quarries Inspectors.

Six inspectors have recently joined the inspectorate or will do so shortly. Inspectors visit mines in accordance with work plans drawn up by inspectors in charge of local districts taking account of local circumstances and knowledge.

Coal and Glass Industries

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Paymaster General what numbers were employed in the coal and glass industries, respectively, in the Castleford travel-to-work area *(a)* in 1969 and *(b)* in 1985.

Mr. Lang: The precise information requested is not available.

The following table gives the latest available figures from the 1981 census of employment and the earliest on a consistent basis which are for 1971. More up-to-date employment estimates for travel-to-work areas will become available following publication of the 1984 census of employment later this year.

Figures for the glass industry alone cannot be given without indirectly disclosing confidential information relating to individual firms. Figures are therefore given for a broader group of industries comprising the manufacture of glass, bricks, fireclay and refractory goods, pottery, abrasives and certain building materials.

Employees in employment in the Castleford travel-to-work area (thousands)
Industry and Order or Minimum List Heading (MLH) of the Standard Industrial Classification 1968

	June 1971	*September 1981*
Coal mining (MLH 101)	13·7	12·4
Bricks, pottery, glass, etc. (Order XVI)	3·8	3·1

As results of the 1971 census are not available for the new travel-to-work areas (as announced in 1984) figures are given for the travel-to-work area as defined before the 1984 review.

Coal Industry

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of fatalities and injuries at work in the mining industry since 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The available information is shown in the following table:

Accidents in mines in Great Britain reported to Her Majesty's Mines and Quarries Inspectorate

Year	*Deaths*	*Serious injuries**	*Major injuries*	*Other injuries†*
1970	97	667	n/a	90,319
1971	79	660	n/a	77,139
1972	71	554	n/a	59,181
1973	88	584	n/a	64,905
1974	50	511	n/a	49,606
1975	66	610	n/a	53,974
1976	58	555	n/a	50,842
1977	42	517	n/a	49,563
1978	69	511	n/a	46,863
1979	48	473	n/a	40,860
1980	46	512	n/a	36,543
1981	37	n/a	838	‡30,265
1982	39	n/a	881	‡24,110
1983	32	n/a	853	‡18,592
1984‖	21	n/a	298	n/a
1985‖	30	n/a	650	n/a

* The Notification of Accident and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR), which came into force in 1981, introduced a new definition on a wider basis than the earlier category of serious injuries.
† Injuries leading to absence from work of over three days.
‡ from 1981 onwards such injuries to employees in NCB mines only
‖ Figures affected by consequences of the miners strike (began March 1984, ended March 1985)
p=provisional
n/a=not available.

Microwave Radiation

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Paymaster General when he expects the new guidelines on standards of protection for the public against microwave radiation to be published by the National Radiological Protection Board.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my right hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Leicester (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Spencer asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about his recent official visit to Leicester.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I paid a short visit to Leicester on Friday 25 April. My first engagement was with the Leicester and county chamber of commerce and industry to discuss the inner cities initiative in Highfields. I met a number of local employers and we explored the role the private sector might play. Afterwards I met some representatives from the local community and invited them to put forward specific ideas and proposals for the task force to consider.

During my visit I emphasised that the task force aims to work in close co-operation with all sections of the community in drawing up plans for action to tackle Highfields' problems.

Job Security Clearance

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Paymaster General what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the use of job security clearance in respect of persons from Northern Ireland applying for certain sensitive posts in Great Britain; to what types of post such clearance applies; and what assessment he has made of the effects on the

ability of applicants from Northern Ireland to compete for posts with other candidates who are not subject to such clearance.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 May 1986]: I have been asked to reply.

It is not clear to which posts the hon. Member refers.

Applicants for employment in Government service in Great Britain are subject to such pre-employment inquiries as the nature of the post requires, irrespective of whether they are from Northern Ireland or from England, Scotland or Wales.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

European Community Food Exports

Mr. Terlezki asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tonnes of European Economic Community beef, butter, grain and litres of wine have been sold to the Soviet Union, during the years 1975 to 1980 and 1980 to 1985; what has been the cost paid by the British taxpayer; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested on European Community exports to the Soviet Union for 1985 is contained in my later reply today to my hon. Friend. Similar information for the periods 1976 to 1983 and 1984 have been provided in replies of 25 March 1975, at columns *1-2*, and 20 February 1986, at columns *331-34*. Information on a similar basis for 1975 is not readily available. Details are not available of the costs of refunds on exports to individual destinations.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the amounts of foodstuffs exported by the EEC to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and east Europe in 1985; and if he will provide details of the comparable export totals in each of the previous five years.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 12 May 1986, c. *372*]: The information requested for 1985 is contained in the table. Comparable information for the periods 1976 to 1983 and 1984 was contained in replies of 21 October 1985, at columns *1-2*, and 20 February 1986, at columns *331-34*, respectively.

1985 European Community exports of the main agricultural commodities to USSR and the rest of Eastern Europe†

	USSR '000 tonnes	*Eastern Europe excluding USSR* '000 tonnes
Wheat	4,753	1,056
Barley	2,577	902
Wheat flour	*	*
Rice	108	0
Malt	*	10
Wholemilk powder	6	*
Skimmed milk powder	0	*
Condensed milk	0	0
Butter and butteroil	162	*
Beef and veal	84	13
Pigmeat	0	*
Poultrymeat	2	3
Sugar total‡ (white equivalent)	*	15
of which refined sugar	*	2
Wine	na	na

Source: EUROSTAT.

* Less than 500 tonnes.

† Includes German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania.

‡ Includes raw sugar converted to white sugar equivalent: 1 tonne raw sugar=0·92 tonnes white sugar.

na not available

Frozen Food

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why Her Majesty's Government decided no to consult the British frozen food industry on the provision in the Spanish treaty of accession to the European Economic Community increasing duties on frozen food imports to Spain from 4·1 per cent. to 15·7 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 8 April, at column 36.

SCOTLAND

Housing Improvement, Maryhill

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to the reply of 27 March, *Official Report*, columns 590-91, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill he can indicate when Glasgow district council will be advised of a decision on the Woodlands (Maryhill Road No. 1) housing action area for improvement.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to inform Glasgow district council of his decision on the draft Woodlands (Maryhill Road No. 1) housing action area for improvement within the next few weeks.

Regional Councils (Expenditure)

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek powers to intervene when there is prima facie evidence that a regional council is undertaking expenditure on matters which are properly the responsibility of district councils and which could have the effect of making ratepayers in one district pay for facilities provided for another district.

Mr. Ancram: The powers of regional and district councils were recently reviewed by the committee chaired by Lord Stodart of Leaston. The Government implemented their response to the committee's recommendations in the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982. It is up to authorities to satisfy themselves that they have the necessary power to incur expenditure on particular services. If an authority incurs expenditure beyond its powers, that is a matter for the auditor under the arrangements set out in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

Mental Health Officers

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what proportion of mental health officers appointed before 1 April have so far fulfilled the requirements regarding training and so on of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984; and what arrangements are being made for training and so on for those who have not yet fulfilled these requirements.

Mr. John MacKay: The rate of progress is a matter for local authorities, but I understand that some 200

persons have completed extensive courses and that some 200 have undertaken introductory training. Most were appointed as mental health officers before 1 April 1986. Directions made by my right hon. and learned Friend on 29 March 1985 require local authorities to satisfy themselves as to the qualifications, experience and competence of the officers concerned for the purpose of such appointments. Training and assessment for this purpose are subject to arrangement by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work. Officers appointed before 1 April 1986 are required to have met these requirements not later than 31 March 1987.

Child Abuse

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the light of the draft circular on child abuse issued by the Secretary of State for Social Services he has any plans to issue a circular in Scotland on the same subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I have no plans to issue a similar draft in Scotland. Scottish local authorities have developed procedures for handling cases of child abuse in the light of earlier guidance. They are conscious of the need to maintain and improve standards and to ensure effective co-operation with health and other services, and I am not persuaded that further guidance from central Government is needed. The Scottish Education Department recently issued a report on social work issues in child abuse which has been widely welcomed, and officials will be discussing with local authorities whether any specific aspects need to be followed up and reviewed.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Bed and Breakfast Establishments

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what survey his Department is taking as to the number of bed and breakfast establishments in each of the 32 London boroughs; and if he will make a list of them;

(2) what survey is taken by his Department of the general conditions of the bed and breakfast accommodation which are now available under the bed and breakfast regulations;

(3) what survey his Department has taken of the number of people who have been forced to move from the London borough of Wandsworth as a result of the bed and breakfast accommodation regulations;

(4) what survey his Department has made in the London borough of Wandsworth of the number of bedspaces now available to unemployed homeless people;

(5) what survey his Department has taken as to the number of bed and breakfast establishments which charge within his Department's limits; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what is the present number of bed and breakfast units available for homeless people within the London Borough of Wandsworth.

Mr. Newton: I regret that comprehensive information is not available centrally on the number of hotels and other board and lodging establishments, their charges and available bedspaces in Wandsworth, London or Great Britain. This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Accommodation standards in houses in multiple occupation—which include board and lodging establishments — are a matter for individual local authorities who have a wide range of powers. As part of the current review of board and lodging limits, information has been collected about the charges in a sample of different types of boarder accommodation throughout the country and findings will be made available in due course. The results of recent surveys of boader claimants, which will also be made available, indicate that most claimants seen thought their lodging provided good value for money, and that very few moved to a different board and lodging area following the introduction of new rules in April and November 1985.

Family Practitioner Committees

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to standardise the charges made by family practitioner committees for the provision of age-sex registers and computer printouts of patient lists to general practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The costs to family practitioner committees of producing age-sex registers and patient lists for general medical practitioners vary according to local circumstances, including the presence or absence of computers. I have no plans to introduce standard charges.

Disablement Benefit

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will estimate the number of disabled persons who would be entitled to disablement benefit but for the current therapeutic earnings limit.

Mr. Newton: Information on sickness benefit, invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance claims disallowed because of the limit on earnings from work done for therapeutic purposes is not available centrally. An estimate could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Pontefract Health Authority

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff are employed within the Pontefract district health authority; and what proportion are *(a)* doctors, *(b)* nurses and midwives and *(c)* administrators.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks. Senior medical and dental staff (that is, the consultants and senior registrars) have their contracts with regional health authorities or teaching districts only, and are not allocated to individual districts in centrally held statistics. It is not therefore possible to provide an overall total number of staff employed within a specific district. Those staffing figures which are available, are shown in the table:

National Health Service directly employed staff
Pontefract district health authority at
30 September 1985

*Whole-time equivalents**

	Number
Total non-medical plus junior medical and dental staff which includes:	2,060
Junior medical and dental staff†	60
Nursing and midwifery staff (provisional)	1,080
Administrative and clerical staff (provisional)‡	250

*All figures rounded to nearest 10 WTEs.
†Includes locum staff. Excludes consultants and senior registrars, hospital practitioners and clinical assistants.
‡Excludes FPC staff.
Sources: DHSS Annual Censuses of Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service beds and private beds were available in the Pontefract district health authority at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the table.

Pontefract District Health Authority

	1984
National Health Service hospitals	
Average daily number of available beds	904
Authorised pay beds at 31 December	4
Private institutions	
Number of beds	nil

Child Abuse

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to discuss his Department's draft circular child abuse with local authorities with social services responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The draft circular and guide to arrangements for inter-agency co-operation for the protection of children were issued on 6 May to a wide range of interested organisations including the local authority associations and each local authority with social services responsibilities. Written comments which could if necessary be supplemented by discussion are being sought by 30 September.

Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration

Sir Antony Buck asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on his Department's performance in responding to requests for information from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and on the time taken by his Department to respond to such requests.

Mr. Fowler: Many of these cases require detailed and scrupulous inquiry into complicated circumstances but nevertheless, we accept that delays have been too long. We propose to take steps to speed up the handling of cases in local and regional offices and to utilise additional staff time on the headquarters function of examining replies to the Parliamentary Commissioner.

Board for Disablement Services

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the names of the members of the board for disablement services and their present occupations; if he will state to whom it is responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: There is no Board for Disablement Services. For the time being the general manager of disablement services is accountable to the National Health Service management board. We expect to reach decisions about future arrangements after current consultations are completed and when we have received advice from the management board.

Reye's Syndrome

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the report of the British Reye's syndrome surveillance scheme was completed; what consultations are taking place on it; if he will place a copy of the report in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The report of the British Reye's syndrome surveillance scheme has not yet been completed. The data is being assessed, and the Committee on Safety of Medicines is considering a preliminary communication from the authors.

Neurosurgery

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the hospitals in *(a)* London and *(b)* the rest of the United Kingdom where neurosurgery can be performed on children.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 April 1986, c. *534*]: The available information is given in the table.

NHS hospitals with beds available in the specialties of paediatrics and neurosurgery in 1984

London

Central Middlesex Hospital, Brent
Charing Cross Hospital, Hammersmith and Fulham
Westminster Hospital, Victoria
Oldchurch Hospital, Barking Havering Brentwood
Royal Free Hospital, Hampstead
University College Hospital, Bloomsbury
Middlesex Hospital, Bloomsbury
St. Bartholomew's Hospital, City and Hackney
London Hospital Whitechapel, Tower Hamlets
Brook General Hospital, Greenwhich
King's College Hospital, Camberwell
Hospital for Sick Children, Gt. Ormond St.

Rest of England

The General Hospital, Hartlepool
Newcastle General Hospital, Newcastle Upon Tyne
Hull Royal Infirmary
Leeds General Infirmary, Leeds Western
Clarendon Wing, General Infirmary, Leeds Western
Pinderfield Hospital, Wakefield
Derby Children's Hospital, Southern Derbyshire
Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge
Royal Alexandra Hospital, Brighton
Cuckfield Hospital, Mid Downs
Southampton General Hospital, South West Hampshire and Southampton
John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford
Frenchay Hospital, Frenchay
Freedom Fields Hospital, Plymouth
Greenbank Hospital, Plymouth
North Staffs, Royal Infirmary, North Staffordshire
Stoke City General Hospital, North Staffordshire
Birmingham Children's Hospital, Central Birmingham
Royal Preston Hospital, Preston
Booth Hall Children's Hospital, North Manchester
St. Mary's Hospital, Central Manchester
Royal Manchester Children's Hospital, Salford

Family Credit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services at what level of gross income entitlement to housing benefit will cease, assuming that family credit is claimed where appropriate under his proposals in Cmnd. 9691 on the same basis as his reply of 24 January to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East; *Official Report*, columns *345-6*.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 April 1986, c. *264-65*]: The gross income levels at which entitlement to housing benefit will cease on the illustrative assumptions used in the technical annex to Cmnd. 9691, and assuming family credit is claimed where appropriate, are set out as follows. Entitlement ceases at a lower gross income where family credit is in payment than where it is not because family credit will not be subject to income tax or national insurance contributions.

Household Type	*Gross Income (£ weekly)*
(i) Single person	71.52
(ii) Childless couple	98.76
(iii) Couple with one child	114.99
(iv) Couple with two children	117.80
(v) Couple with three children	134.04
(vi) Couple with four children	145.39
(vii) Lone parent with one child	96.81
(viii) Lone parent with two children	106.79
(ix) Lone parent with three children	123.70
(x) Lone parent with four children	138.68

Notes

1. The following rent and domestic rate levels respectively have been assumed for the various household types: £13.80 and £5.20 for (i) and (ii), £15.40 and £6.20 for (iii) and (vii); £16.50 and £6.30 for (iv), (v), (vi), (viii), (ix) and (x).
2. The current minimum benefit level of 50 pence has been used throughout.
3. The November 1985 tax allowances, national insurance rates, and levels of child benefit and one-parent benefit, have been used throughout.
4. The single person has been assumed to be aged over 25.
5. The ages of the children have been assumed to be as follows: under 11 years where only 1 or 2 children; 1 over 11 and 2 under 11 years where 3 children; 2 over 11 an 2 under 11 years where 4 children.
6. It has been assumed in each case that the head of the household only is in work.
7. Other assumptions are based on the illustrative figures used in the Technical Annex to Cmnd. 9691; income support rates as in paragraph 2.4 of the Annex; a taper of 60 per cent. for housing benefit in relation to rent and 20 per cent. in relation to rates; and all householders make a minimum contribution of 20 per cent. towards their rates.

Asbestos

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action has been taken on the Standing Medical Advisory Committee report, "Control of the cancer hazard due to asbestos to the general population".

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to the reply*, 2 May 1986, c. *514*]: There was no such report issued by the Standing Medical Advisory Committee. However in 1968 a sub-committee of SMAC, under the chairmanship of the then Dr. W. R. S. Doll, made various recommendations in a committee working paper — entitled "Control of the cancer hazard due to asbestos to the general population", and SMAC accepted the sub-committee's recommendations.

The recommendations relating to the use of crocidolite and the labelling of asbestos were implemented voluntarily by industry. With the setting up of the Advisory Committee on Asbestos by the Health and Safety Commission in 1976 a more comprehensive control programme for the use, substitution and disposal of asbestos was put into effect. I shall write to the hon. Member to explain the controls that now exist.

General Practice (Premises)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown of the total spent in each year since 1979 by the Government on premises for general practice in both cash and constant prices.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *88*]: The amounts directly reimbursed to general medical practitioners for rent (including notional rent for surgeries owned by the occupying practitioners and cost rents where appropriate), rates (including water rates) and improvement grants for each financial year since 1979 are as follows:

£ million

	Cash			*At 1984-85 prices*		
	Rent	*Rates*	*Grants*	*Rent*	*Rates*	*Grants*
1979-80	13·5	6·0	0·8	20·5	9·1	1·3
1980-81	17·9	7·3	1·3	22·9	9·3	1·7
1981-82	21·3	9·1	1·6	24·8	10·6	1·8
1982-83	26·1	10·5	1·8	28·4	11·5	2·0
1983-84	33·0	11·9	2·3	34·4	12·3	2·3
1984-85	37·3	13·7	3·1	37·3	13·7	3·1
1985-86*	44·8	14·4	3·9	42·3	13·6	3·7

* Provisional.

Central Birmingham Health Authority

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will institute an inquiry into the financial management of central Birmingham health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 May 1986]: No. Some time ago departmental auditors discovered certain shortcomings in this authority's financial management, and a plan of corrective action, agreed with my officials and the West Midlands regional health authority, is now taking effect. I therefore see no purpose in instituting an inquiry. The NHS management board pays particular attention to financial management as part of its annual review of regional health authorities' performance.

Insulation Projects

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for the future funding of local insulation projects run by volunteer groups following the proposed abolition of single payments.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 May 1986]: The Government fully recognise the value of draughtproofing work carried out by voluntary groups, and we are considering future arrangements for help with these in the context of assistance with energy conservation measures as a whole. In particular, we shall wish to ensure that there is an effective alternative to the current arrangements under which single payments of supplementary benefit can be made to cover the cost of draughtproofing materials.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Monetary System

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reasons the EEC Commission gave for declining the Council's request to provide details of the overall budgetary effects of the European monetary system

realignment for items other than common agricultural policy expenditure; if the Council will now require the Commission to provide this information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Commission did not explain why it would not give estimates of the overall budgetary effects of the EMS realignment, though the calculations are not straightforward, and there are particular difficulties in distinguishing the effects of the realignment itself from conjunctural factors. The Commission has said that it expects further discussion of this question when the 1986 preliminary draft supplementary and amending budget is put forward. The Council is not in a position to require the Commission to produce estimates.

Inland Revenue

Sir Antony Buck asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is satisfied with the performance of the Inland Revenue in responding to requests for information from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration; and whether he will make a statement about the time taken by the Inland Revenue to respond to such requests.

Mr. Moore: Yes. The Inland Revenue gives a very high priority to Parliamentary Commissioner cases. Officials are required to give them immediate attention at all stages. Average response time is just over two months. Given the need to obtain papers and reports from a wide network of local offices and for close scrutiny by senior officers it is difficult to produce responses in a significantly shorter time.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimate of revenue forgone in 1985 from exempting gains in the value of sole or main residences from the provisions of capital gains tax in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Agriculture (Self-employed Persons)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date the information on self-employed agricultural incomes and tax given in his answers in the *Official Report* of 14 March 1985, at columns *246-52*, and of 26 March 1985, at columns *156-58*.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *100*]: The latest available information is for 1983-84 and is given in tables 1 to 4.

Table 1
Total income by range of total income: self-employed in agriculture and horticulture

Range of total income (lower limit)	*Number of tax units (thousands)*	*Amount of total income (£ million)*
1	8	2
1,000	37	67
2,500	70	249
5,000	52	315
7,500	26	220
10,000	36	439
15,000	13	224
20,000	17	565
All ranges	259	2,080

Source: Survey of Personal Incomes 1983-84.

Notes to table 1: The number ot tax units is the number of married couples and single people whose "main source" of income, usually but not always the largest source, was from self employment in agriculture and horticulture. Total income includes investment income and is before personal allowances. Non-taxable social security benefits are excluded. Profits from self-employment are included in total income net of allowable expenses and after deducting losses, capital allowances and stock relief. "All ranges" include a small number with total income that was nil or (after deducting losses) negative.

The amounts of the deductions from Gross Profits are given in table 2.

Table 2:
Deductions from Gross Profit: self-employed in Agriculture and Horticulture—1983-84

	Amount £ million
Losses	50
Capital Allowances	490
Stock Relief	70

Information on gross profits, by range of gross profits, comparable with that previously supplied for 1982-83 is given in table 3 and corresponding information on taxable profit by range of taxable profit is given in table 4.

Table 3
Gross Profit from Agriculture and Horticulture
Income Tax Year 1983-84

	Husbands plus single people		*Wives*		*All individuals*	
Range of gross profit (£) (Lower Limit)	*Number of cases ('000)*	*Gross profit (£ million)*	*Number of cases ('000)*	*Gross profit (£ million)*	*Number of cases ('000)*	*Gross profit (£ million)*
Nil*	19	0	1	0	19	0
1	22	10	7	3	30	14
1,000	15	19	3	4	18	22
1,500	17	30	5	8	22	38
2,000	14	32	5	10	19	42
2,500	14	39	3	7	17	46
3,000	14	45	4	12	18	57
3,500	11	41	2	7	13	47
4,000	10	44	3	12	13	56
4,500	8	39	3	14	11	53
5,000	17	93	5	25	22	118
6,000	16	105	3	20	19	125
7,000	13	99	3	21	16	119

Range of gross profit (£) (Lower Limit)	Husbands plus single people: Number of cases ('000)	Husbands plus single people: Gross profit (£ million)	Wives: Number of cases ('000)	Wives: Gross profit (£ million)	All individuals: Number of cases ('000)	All individuals: Gross profit (£ million)
8,000	18	156	3	29	21	184
10,000	13	134	1	15	14	149
12,000	10	128	1	17	11	145
15,000	12	211	3	57	16	268
20,000	14	453	2	70	16	524
All Ranges	259	1,680	57	331	316	2,010

* Including cases with losses.
Note: Gross profit includes balancing charges and stock relief withdrawn.
Source: Survey of Personal Incomes 1983-84.

Table 4
Taxable Profit from Agriculture and Horticulture
Income Tax Year 1983-84

Range of taxable profit (£) (Lower Limit)	Husbands plus single people: Number of cases ('000)	Husbands plus single people: Taxable profit (£ million)	Wives: Number of cases ('000)	Wives: Taxable profit (£ million)	All individuals: Number of cases ('000)	All individuals: Taxable profit (£ million)
Nil*	29	−13	2	−2	32	−14
1	25	12	7	3	32	15
1,000	16	20	4	4	20	24
1,500	21	37	8	14	29	51
2,000	18	40	5	11	23	51
2,500	25	67	5	13	30	80
3,000	14	43	3	10	17	53
3,500	11	42	2	8	13	50
4,000	14	57	3	14	17	72
4,500	6	28	1	7	7	35
5,000	16	86	4	21	20	107
6,000	14	91	2	15	16	105
7,000	10	76	3	21	13	97
8,000	11	99	2	22	14	121
10,000	9	100	1	11	10	111
12,000	8	102	2	22	9	124
15,000	5	82	1	17	6	99
20,000	7	197	1	25	8	222
All Ranges	259	1,170	57	235	316	1,400

* Including cases with losses.
Source: Survey of Personal Incomes 1983-84.

Notes to Tables 3 and 4.

The number of cases is the number of married men and single people whose "main source" — usually but not always the largest source—of earned income is from self-employment in agriculture and horticulture; plus the number of married women whose largest source of self employment income is from agriculture and horticulture. Gross profit and taxable profit includes any non-agricultural/horticultural profits of the individual concerned but excludes agricultural-horticultural profits of married men and single people whose "main source" of earned income is not from self-employment in agriculture and horticulture and of married women whose largest source of self-employment income is not from agriculture and horticulture.

Agriculture (Expenditure Limits)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what limit on *(a)* overall and *(b)* agricultural spending has been set by the European Economic Community Council of Ministers for 1987; and how this compares with the equivalent figures for 1986.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *98*]: The figures are as follows:

Reference Framework

Million ecu

	1986	*1987*
Agricultural Guideline	20,619·4	21,648·8
Ad Hoc Addition for Spain and Portugal	567·0	1,312·0
Total Agricultural Guarantee Spending	21,186·4	22,960·8
Non Compulsory Expenditure	6,536·7	7,950·1
Other Compulsory Expenditure	2,535·7	4,393·3
TOTAL AMOUNT	30,258·8	35,304·2

The figures for non-compulsory expenditure and other compulsory expenditure (and hence the totals) are not strictly comparable, since the 1986 figures were calculated on an EC10 basis, and those for 1987 on an EC12 basis.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 14 May 1986

WALES

Cancer Treatment Facilities

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 28 April, *Official Report*, column 287, he will publish the reports of the departmental working party on regional services to north Wales and of the Welsh medical committee advisory group on cancer services.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A consultation paper incorporating the findings and recommendations of the departmental working party on regional services to north Wales is in preparation and expected to be issued shortly. The report of the Welsh Medical Committee Advisory Group on cancer services was only recently received and is presently being studied.

Soviet-Nuclear Accident

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales if there has been nuclear radiation from the Chernobyl catastrophe in the Ukraine, registered in South Glamorgan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In South Glamorgan levels of radioactivity detected were low, and even at their peak remained well below that which could prove a threat to public health. We are continuing to monitor the situation.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Fraud

Mr. Best asked the Attorney-General, what are his latest figures for fraud prosecution under the fraud investigation group procedures; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The latest information available from the Director of Public Prosecutions relates to the first quarter of 1986. During that period 26 trials on indictment (involving 66 defendants) handled by the fraud divisions of his Department were completed. Pleas of guilty or convictions were obtained in 24 cases. The outcome of those cases when analysed in terms of defendants was as follows:

	Number
Pleaded guilty	35
Convicted	21
Acquitted	9
Nolle prosequi entered	1

Of the 26 cases, six were formerly designated as FIG cases, but FIG methods are increasing employed even when a case is not formally so designated. The total sum at risk exceeded £44 million. The average length of the trial in contested cases was 12 days.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

ASIAN Development Bank

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to provide additional resources to the ASIAN Development Bank.

Mr. Raison: Negotiations were concluded in Manila on 28-29 April for a fourth replenishment of the Bank's concessional Asian Development Fund. The replenishment will total United States $3·6 billion, for commitment during the four years 1987 to 1990. Subject to parliamentary approval in due course, Britain's share of the total will be £95·08 million.

Crown Agents (Exhibition)

Mr. Sackville asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for an exhibition to be mounted in the Upper Waiting Hall by Crown Agents stamps.

Mr. Raison: I understand that arrangements have already been made for such an exhibition to be mounted on 3 to 6 June.

TRANSPORT

MV Derbyshire

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place a copy of his Department's draft report, entitled "A Report into the Circumstances attending the loss of MV 'Derbyshire'" which foundered about 9 September 1980 in position approximately 25° 30' north, 130° 30' east with the loss of 44 lives, dated July 1985, in the Library.

Mr. Ridley: The document to which the hon. Member refers was an early draft of the Department's report into the loss of MV Derbyshire, which was circulated only to interested parties for their comments. The draft was subsequently revised in the light of comments received and of further information which became available. A copy of the final report was placed in the Library on 21 March. It would not be appropriate to place the earlier version in the Library as well.

Roadworks (London)

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of the recent road works at *(a)* Aldwych and *(b)* the south end of Westminster bridge.

Mr. Ridley: Since these schemes are the responsibility of respectively the City of Westminster and the London borough of Lambeth, I regret I cannot give my right hon. Friend the answers.

Bus Shelters

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what grants he makes available for the construction of bus shelters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No grants are available from central Government specifically for this purpose. The provision of bus shelters is a matter for local authorities and the bus operators concerned.

Tyres (Tread Depth)

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has decided to amend the regulations governing tyre tread depth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On 25 February I held a meeting with the organisations most concerned to discuss the information set out in the Department's consultation paper about the enforcement and road safety implications of the 1983 regulations on tyre tread depth. In the light of this information and the opinions expressed at the meeting I have concluded that the present regulations can be enforced without undue difficulty and that the changes proposed by the tyre industry and others would impose a substantial cost to road users without any significant benefit to road safety. I therefore see no reason to amend the regulations.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teacher Training

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has for intakes to courses at initial teacher training in the public sector of higher education in England; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: My Department is today writing to the institutions concerned, and to their governing and validating bodies, to inform them of my provisional decisions about the allocation to institutions of the overall target numbers of students to be admitted to courses of initial teacher training in the public sector beginning in 1987-89. I shall make final decisions after considering any representations that I may receive.

The overall target numbers are closely in line with those which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I announced on 26 March 1985 following advice from the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers. These targets take account of forecast demand for teachers into the 1990s, the acknowledged need for some further modest improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio and the gradual increase in total pupil numbers which is expected to feed through from primary into secondary schools by the end of the decade. They allow for a substantial expansion of intakes to primary training — targets for England increase from 7,020 in 1985 to 8,615 in 1989. For secondary training the targets are raised from 3,930 to 4,545; these numbers exceed the likely short-term needs of schools will maintain the capacity of training institutions to expand to meet future increase in demand for secondary teachers. The total numbers provisionally allocated to each institution for 1987-89 are set out in the table.

My basic aim has been to allocate the overall numbers to institutions in the way most likely to foster the further development of a high-quality, cost-effective and resilient system of initial teacher training capable of responding flexibly to changing demands into the 1990s. For the training of primary teachers I have sought to ensure that all teacher training establishments offering Bachelor of Education courses should be able to provide a minimum of two years' subject study at a level appropriate to higher education across a range of curricular specialisms. I have given particular attention to the need to provide for an increase in training for teaching pupils in the early years of primary education and to the need for more attention to mathematics and science as subject specialisms within primary BEd courses. For training for secondary teaching I have concluded that the system would be strengthened by ensuring that all subject intakes should be of 15 or more. I have also sought to ensure the reinforcement of subject strength by grouping intakes to related secondary subjects together within the same institutions. I have had particular regard to institutions' capacity to recruit to those secondary subjects such as mathematics, science, and CDT for which recruitment has always been difficult, to new courses in these subjects intended to widen the pool of recruitment and to proposals for courses which utilise skills in ethnic minority languages.

The result is some shift in the balance of provision between institutions and courses in the interests of strengthening the system of training as a whole, taking account of the capabilities of individual institutions in the light of the planning criteria notified to them. As a result intakes to courses of initial teacher training will remain steady or increase at 50 out of 54 institutions as set out in the table. The allocations also provide for the ending of intakes to courses of initial teacher training from 1987 at two institutions, Humberside CHE and Portsmouth polytechnic, and for an expansion of secondary and cessation of primary intakes at one, the College of St. Mark and St. John.

I have been particularly concerned to foster the academic strength of institutions so that future teachers will be fitted to meet the increasing demands for more rigorous and effective teaching in schools. I have invited all institutions in the public sector to look particularly carefully at the further development of their existing strengths through closer academic integration with other advanced further education, within their own institution or outside. Where these associations involve universities they present valuable scope for extending and strengthening transbinary academic cooperation between the university and public sectors. Progress to this end will be reviewed in two to three years' time. I have invited five small institutions (Bishop Grosseteste college, Charlotte Mason college, North Riding college, Rolle college and Westminster college) to enter into closer academic association with more broadly based higher education institutions; their 1988 and 1989 intakes will be reviewed in the light of progress with those associations. I have also asked two other small institutions, Bretton Hall and La Sainte Union college, to examine the scope for closer academic association with another institution. In the case of Hertfordshire CHE, I will review its 1988 and 1989 intakes in the light of progress towards academic integration as part of their intended merger with Hatfield polytechnic.

I believe that this allocation of target numbers will help to develop a stronger, more robust and effective system of initial teacher training, with greater academic strength and more resilience to meet the challenges facing education in the 1990s.

Total Target Intakes to ITT Courses

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Polytechnics					
Birmingham	220	230	240	240	240
Brighton	335	311	340	355	380
Bristol	245	272	305	295	315
Kingston	160	161	175	180	200
Leeds	290	287	310	305	315
Leicester	50	48	50	50	50
Liverpool	225	243	270	285	305
Manchester	467	540	530	530	545
Middlesex	240	227	250	250	260
Newcastle	169	192	195	210	215
North London (inc. Central School of Speech and Drama)	90	103	120	155	155
Oxford	150	147	160	170	180
Portsmouth	95	107	0	0	0
Sheffield	320	360	380	385	395
South Bank	140	158	175	180	185
Sunderland	160	178	200	230	240
Thames	289	281	370	405	425
Trent	285	335	325	345	350
Wolverhampton Polytechnic and West Midlands College	330	354	365	370	395
Other Maintained establishments					
Bath College	255	246	250	265	270
Bedford College	165	188	225	225	245
Bradford and Ilkley College	160	162	175	175	180
Bretton Hall College	170	206	205	210	215
Bulmershe College	190	205	220	240	240
Charlotte Mason College	110	131	175	185	185
Crewe and Alsager College	290	301	340	335	350
Derbyshire College	155	145	155	160	165
Edge Hill College	267	279	285	280	280
Essex Institute	110	117	145	150	150
Hertfordshire College	215	185	185	190	190
Humberside College	120	93	0	0	0
Nene College	140	141	165	170	175
North Riding College	130	131	135	175	190
Rolle College	160	156	170	195	220
Worcester College	185	223	255	270	290
Voluntary Colleges					
Bishop Grosseteste College	120	141	150	175	195
Chester College	130	117	145	155	165
Christ Church College	207	230	260	275	280
Homerton College	222	256	255	260	270
King Alfred's College	242	209	230	240	250
La Sainte Union College	180	195	205	220	230
Liverpool Institute	325	339	335	345	355
Newman and Westhill Colleges	220	238	245	230	230
College of Ripon and York St. John	222	241	265	260	275
Roehampton Institute	562	540	535	560	570
College of St. Mark and St. John	115	152	90	125	130
St. Martin's College	217	251	270	270	270
St. Mary's College	175	203	210	210	215
College of St. Paul and St. Mary	224	201	210	215	225
Trinity and All Saints' College	195	236	255	270	295
West London Institute	217	212	215	220	220
Westminster College	145	171	195	210	225
West Sussex Institute	185	226	245	250	265
Goldsmiths' College	385	395	395	395	395

Nursery Education

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the proportion of under-fives in nursery education in the United Kingdom; and what information he has about the equivalent figures for France, Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Dunn: There is no standard definition of "nursery education". The forms of pre-school provision vary between and within countries, as does practice in the age and times of year at which children are admitted to compulsory education. The table shows the latest available comparative information on all forms of grouped provision for young children. Rates for both three and four, and three to five-year-olds are shown, as in the other countries compulsory schooling starts at age six.

Percentage of age group: 1982

	Three to five-year-olds		*Three and four-year-olds*	
	Education	*Day care**	*Education*	*Day care**
United Kingdom	†61	27	43	40
France	97	‖	95	‖
Japan	44	‡27	33	26
United States of America	52	¶	36	¶

* Includes day nurseries, playgroups, kindergartens and other grouped provision where these occur. Excludes care supervised by a childminder or relative.
† Includes nursery schools and all pupils aged up to five in primary schools.
‡ 1979.
‖ Not applicable.
¶ Not available.

Universities and Public Sector Institutions

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the cost per student on full-time first degree courses in universities and public sector institutions, respectively, of those studying *(a)* medicine, *(b)* physics, *(c)* mathematics, *(d)* engineering, *(e)* English, *(f)* modern languages and *(g)* social studies at the latest available date.

Mr. Walden: The available information including research costs funded through the institutions is as follows:

Great Britain universities: student unit costs 1983-84 academic year

Subject	*Net institutional recurrent unit cost* £
Clinical medicine	8,080
Physical sciences	6,410
Mathematics	4,150
Engineering	5,630
Arts (including English and modern languages)	3,750
Social studies	3,630

England public sector higher education: student unit cost 1983-84 financial year

	Net institutional recurrent unit cost £
Practical subjects	3,590
Classroom-based subjects	2,460

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in real terms the movement of salaries for *(a)* professors, *(b)* readers, *(c)* senior lecturers and *(d)* lecturers at British universities and at public sector institutions, respectively, over the period 1970, 1974, 1979, and at the latest available date.

Mr. Walden: Information in the precise form requested is not available. Movements of the maximum points of the relevant salary scales, (and of the average salaries of university professors) are as follows:

Universities

	Lecturer (maximum)		Senior Lecturer/Reader (maximum)		Professor (average)	
	Salary (£) ‖	Index¶	Salary (£)	Index	Salary (£)	Index
1 October 1970	17,126	100·0	22,058	100·0	28,118	100·0
1 October 1974	16,172	94·4	19,739	89·5	23,970	85·2
1 October 1979	15,697	91·7	18,811	85·3	22,543	79·9
1 April 1985★	15,700	91·7	18,625	84·4	22,346	79·5

Public Sector Institutions

	Lecturer Grade II (maximum)*		Senior Lecturer (maximum)†		Reader (maximum)		Academic Posts Above Reader (maximum)‡	
	Salary (£) ‖	Index¶	Salary (£)	Index	Salary (£)	Index	Salary (£)	Index
1 April 1970	13,084	100·0	14,812	100·0	18,396	100·0	n/a	n/a
24 May 1974•	15,554	118·9	18,807	127·0	22,340	121·4	n/a	n/a
1 April 1979	12,479	95·4	14,406	97·3	16,825	91·5	19,606	100·0
1 December 1985■	12,774	97·6	14,846	100·2	17,386	94·5	19,944	101·7

* Under the Burnham arrangements lecturers grade II are the lowest category of lecturer who may be employed to teach advanced work. Only lecturers teaching advanced work have been included in these figures so as to make them comparable with university lecturers.

† Maximum for senior lecturer teaching a significant proportion of advanced work.

‡ Professors in public sector institutions are paid according to the salary scale for academic posts above reader. This scale was introduced as a result of the Houghton report and did not come into operation until 1975. It is not possible therefore to give comparisons before the 1979-85 period.

‖ Derived by multiplying the cash salary at each date by the increase in the retail prices index from that date to 1 April 1985 for both universities and public sector institutions.

¶ This indicates the movement of salaries in real terms compared to the base year of 1970 (and 1 April 1979 for academic posts above reader in the case of public sector institutions).

• Date of Houghton award.

■ The 1985 pay settlement was staged, with an increase of 5 per cent. from 1 April 1985 and 2 per cent. from 1 December 1985 for all scales.

★ Salary incremental date changed from 1 October to 1 April in 1982.

Higher Education

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in tabular form the percentage of total public expenditure and the percentage of gross domestic product spent on higher education in the United Kingdom in every year from 1970 to the latest available date and provide comparable figures for France, West Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada and the United States of America.

Mr. Walden: The following table shows such data that are available and can be provided without disproportionate cost.

Country	Year	Current expenditure on higher education as a percentage of: Gross national product	Current public expenditure
France	[1]1970	0·54	..
	[1]1975	0·44	..
	[2]1980	0·63	..
West Germany	1970	0·46	1·38
	1975	0·72	1·65
	1980	0·62	1·43
Italy	1970	0·33	1·52
	1975	0·40	0·97
Japan [3]	1970	0·37	[4]1·88
	1975	0·40	[4]1·63
	1980	0·44	[4]1·47
	1982	0·41	[4]1·38
Canada	1970	2·08	[4]5·61
	1975	2·02	[4]4·64
	1980	1·95	[4]4·39
	1981	1·94	[4]4·25
United States of America	1970	1·65	8·38
	1975	1·89	9·69
	1977	1·75	9·03
United Kingdom	[1]1971	1·07	3·13
	1975	1·15	3·14
	1980	1·11	2·83
	1982	1·09	2·63
	1983	1·07	2·57

.. not available

[1] Ministries of Education and Universities only

[2] Metropolitan France

[3] From 1975, excludes public subsidies to private education

[4] Higher education current expenditure as a percentage of Total Government Expenditure (including capital)
[5] Figures for 1970 not available
Sources: Department of Education and Science UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1985 (mainly) 'Annual Abstract of Statistics' series

Schools (Parental Choice)

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements he makes for appeals against changes to areas of prime responsibility under the terms of section 12(1)(d) of the Education Act 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on 12 May, at column *319*. Parents may express a preference for any school with which the local education authority must comply unless certain specified reliefs apply. If any parent is unhappy with the authority's decision he may appeal to a local independent appeals committee set up under section 7 of and in accordance with schedule 2 to the 1980 Act. The decision of such an appeal committee is binding on the LEA.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Carryduff Primary School

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils attended Carryduff primary school in each of the past 10 years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number*
January	
1977	362
1978	365
1979	340
1980	316
1981	316
1982	299
1983	296
1984	301
1985	317
1986	346

District Councils

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of those district councils which are *(a)* now holding regular business meetings and *(b)* still not performing their normal business duties.

Mr. Needham: The councils for Derry, Down, Fermanagh, Magherafelt, Moyle, Newry and Mourne, Omagh and Strabane are holding regular meetings; Belfast city council has voted to resume normal meetings.

The remaining councils which are continuing either to suspend or adjourn council meetings are:

Antrim, Ards, Armagh, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Banbridge, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Coleraine, Cookstown, Craigavon, Dungannon, Larne, Limavady, Lisburn, Newtownabbey and North Down.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of persons charged under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1984 and 1985 in Northern Ireland; and what was the total number of persons charged under other Acts with terrorist-type offences in Northern Ireland for 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Officers (Dispute)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the latest position in the dispute with the Prison Officers Association.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: Following my statement to the House on 1 May, a series of exploratory talks have been held between Home Office officials and representatives of the Prison Officers Association with the object of securing a simultaneous calling-off of the POA's industrial action and the start of substantive discussions on the agenda for the future set out in my letter of 22 April to the POA general secretary. The talks have now been concluded by a letter from the permanent under-secretary of State at the Home Office to the association's general secretary, which records the clarification offered during the talks in response to a number of questions about my letter raised by the POA.

The letter includes clarification of the process through which POA branches will be consulted about changes to existing agreements, in amplification of the formula set out in my letter of 22 April, that is:

"Management accepts the Trade Union Side's unfettered right to meet with management to present its concerns in relation to manning levels by means of discussion and consultation leading where possible to agreement. Where agreement is not reached by this process, management will determine manning levels."

The clarification provides that where governors wish to alter existing agreements they will give 14 days notice of their intention to do so in order to allow for discussion of the proposed change. The aim of both sides will be to settle local disputes locally, but in the event of disagreement there is provision for possible reference to a higher level. This reflects current best practice as well as previous agreements with the POA.

The letter from the permanent under-secretary of state maintains the Department's stance (which has been accepted by the POA in the course of the dispute) that where agreement is not possible, management will determine manning levels.

Other issues touched on in the letter include the future handling of this year's pay claim from the association, of tax compensation on housing allowance and of proposals for change in working practices. I am appending the full text to this answer. I welcome the decision of the NEC of the POA, following receipt of the letter, to ballot the association's members, recommending the calling-off of the industrial action.

Dear Mr. Evans

Following the Home Secretary's statement in Parliament on 1 May, NEC representatives and Home Office officials have held a series of discussions designed to achieve the objective of a simultaneous calling off of industrial action (which you have said would require a ballot of your members) and the start of substantive discussions between us about the issues for the future set out in the Home Secretary's letter of 22 April.

In the course of discussions you indicated that it would be helpful if we could clarify a number of points arising from the

Home Secretary's letter. We completed those discussions yesterday. This letter records the clarifications we have made so that the NEC can start the process of calling off the industrial action. I look forward to hearing as soon as possible the NEC's response. It remains our wish to start discussions of the issues in the letter of 22 April as soon as the industrial action is called off.

Consultation about manning levels

You asked, on page 1 of the Home Secretary's letter, how the assurance would work about consultation on manning issues. We agreed in discussion that it would be premature to invoke the draft disputes procedure, which has yet to be considered by your Conference, and which we should anyway want to discuss further with you following that.

We agreed that page 1 of the Home Secretary's letter could usefully be clarified in the following way:

> "Pending the possible introduction of a national disputes procedure, where Governors or Local Branches seek to alter existing agreements they should first give 14 days notice of their intention to do so to the other party(ies) to the agreement in order to allow for discussion of the proposed change. Where such notice is given, due regard should be paid to the provisions of NTS 3/1984.
>
> In the event of disagreement about the proposed change it will be open to either side, if it thinks fit, to seek the intervention of a higher level (Regional Office or the appropriate NEC members). But the aim of both sides will be for local disputes to be settled locally."

I understand that this procedural clarification is acceptable to the NEC and we shall be commending it to Governors on that basis. As the Home Secretary said in his letter, while reserving the final determination of these issues to ourselves, in the event of disagreement we have no intention of riding roughshod over prison officers or the POA on these matters.

This year's pay claim

You also sought clarification on a number of points on page 2 of the Home Secretary's letter, the first of which concerned a resumption of negotiations on this year's pay claim. I can confirm that these would be resumed as soon as industrial action was called off. The Treasury should be able to send a written reply to your claim, as previously envisaged, within a few days of the ending of the action. It would be the aim of the Official Side thereafter to conduct negotiations in such a way as to seek a settlement of this year's pay claim as quickly as might reasonably be done.

The 39 hour week

I am ready to confirm that the Home Secretary's letter of 7 April still stands. He then said that in the light of the progress made in 1985/86, the Government would follow through Mr. Brittan's offer on the 39 hour week. He said that he hoped that the POA would conduct itself in a way which would enable him to convince other Ministers that the Association remained interested in the responsible conduct of business between us. If industrial action were formally called off, the Home Secretary would be ready to consult his Ministerial colleagues about moving to a 39 hour week.

Without prejudice to the result of that consultation, what a 39 hour week would mean in practice would need to be worked out in detail following the withdrawal of industrial action. As I have indicated to you, our assumption is that it would not mean that everybody would continue to work the same number of hours as they do now and receive an additional hour's overtime. The reduction in the working week would have to be effected at nil cost and would require some adjustments to the existing shift arrangements. The precise form of these would be determined at establishment level, on the basis of centrally laid down guidelines. We should be ready to discuss these guidelines with you if the industrial action were called off.

Tax compensation on housing allowance

I can still confirm that tax compensation for 1985-86 will be paid as soon as the industrial action is called off. For the future, we envisage that the pay arrangements, consequent on a new shift and complementing system, would consolidate housing allowance. If this consolidation was agreed for introduction from April next year, we would be ready to make a further payment of tax compensation for 1986-87. If this consolidation were not then agreed, there would need to be separate discussions on phasing out tax compensation.

Phasing out would be our starting point in those discussions because we believe that the dropping of the general obligation to live in has altered the whole basis of housing allowance and we see no future for tax compensation under the present arrangements. You made clear that you would wish to challenge this view. As we have previously made plain, we should be ready to consider any arguments you might advance as to why tax compensation should continue. That would be something to be considered in the substantive discussions which would follow the calling off of industrial action.

New working practices

In his letter of 22 April the Home Secretary said that he would ask the Prison Department to put to you within one month, ie. in time for consideration at your Association's Annual Conference, the outcome of studies on working practices which his predecessor proposed at your Conference last year. The Home Secretary said in the debate in the House of Commons on 6 May that the report of the studies would be published. Following those undertakings, the Report of the Shift and Complementing Study is published today. Copies of the Report are being sent to you, along with the text of the Home Secretary's statement covering publication.

The Home Secretary's statement says that the Government will now work up, on the basis of the report, a package of proposals and as part of that process will be looking at what needs to be done to modernise pay systems to provide fair levels of pay for prison officers. We intend to put these proposals to you as soon as we can following the ending of industrial action.

You asked whether the starting date we envisaged would be 1 April 1987 or, say, 31 March 1987. Our target for the new systems is April 1987. We understand the inwardness of your point and accept that the precise timing of any changes would be for discussion between us.

NEPOs and uniform

In the course of our last meeting, you mentioned that you would want early substantive discussions with the Department, following the calling off of industrial action, on NEPOs and uniform. We shall arrange a meeting as soon as industrial action is over.

Heathrow Airport

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what criteria were used in deciding to provide five channels for other passport holders and two for combined United Kingdom and European Community passport holders at terminal 4 arrivals at Heathrow airport;

(2) if he will arrange to install a separate channel for United Kingdom residents at terminal 4 arrivals at Heathrow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The clearance of British and Community passengers takes less time than the examination of those of other nationalities. The immigration arrivals control at terminal 4 has 28 desks, of which a maximum of 22 are used for the examination of passengers of other nationalities. There are four gates in front of these 22 desks from which passengers are presented to immigration officers.

This ratio of desks was decided on the information available to the Department on the probable proportion of passengers of different nationalities. The control is staffed flexibly and immigration officers can and do switch desks at the discretion of the chief immigration officer on duty with the objective of clearing all passengers in the quickest possible time.

The necessary signs for a separate channel for British passengers will be introduced at terminal 4, Heathrow. It would not be practical to allocate a separate channel to passengers of other nationalities who are resident in the United Kingdom.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what procedures are followed at Heathrow airport when, due to serious flight delays, aircraft arrive at Heathrow airport late at night with large numbers of people seeking re-entry into Britain.

Mr. Waddington: The normal deployment of staff at Heathrow is based on the scheduled times of arrival and departure of flights so that passengers can pass through the controls as rapidly as possible, and resources can be used to the best advantage. When flights are delayed late at night passengers are examined by staff allocated for night duty, augmented by staff on late shift remaining on duty and—or night duty staff from other terminals.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why, on 30 April at 10.30 pm, there were only two officers on duty at the passport desks for United Kingdom and European Community passport holders arriving at terminal 4 at Heathrow airport, with a crowd of over 500 people queueing to be admitted.

Mr. Waddington: The late arrival of a flight from Paris at 9.50 pm on 30 April coincided with another flight from Paris, followed shortly after by a flight from New York. The number of officers available for the control was six. When the passengers arrived in the control hall one immigration officer was stationed at the British — European Community channel. The chief immigration officer on duty allocated a second and then a third officer to that channel when it was clear that the majority of passengers were British, or were Community nationals.

Population Statistics

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give an indication of the number by which the population of the United Kingdom has increased since 1956 in consequence of the arrival of new British citizens.

Mr. Waddington: The available information, derived from the labour force survey, suggests that in 1984 about 3 to 3½ million persons resident in Great Britain had been born abroad, about half of whom had British nationality. The number of United Kingdom residents born abroad who were in Great Britain on the night of the decennial census was 1·6 million in 1951, 2·2 million in 1961, 3·0 million in 1971 and 3·4 million in 1981.

Police (Establishment)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to increase police forces in England and Wales, by at least 10,000, over the next two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Total manpower, police and civilian, in England and Wales has increased by about 14,000 since May 1979, to 160,627 on 28 February 1986, including a increase of more than 9,000 police officers.

In October 1985 my right hon. Friend set work in hand to assess where there are further needs for increases in manpower. These reviews have been completed, and he is now urgently considering their outcome.

Police Duties

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will estimate the proportion of a police officer's time spent on administrative duties; what measures are being taken to reduce this; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will undertake a review of form filling required by the police service with a view to its reduction.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Administrative work in police forces is kept under review by both chief officers and Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary. Chief officers of police are encouraged to release police officers wherever possible from duties which can be more properly and economically carried out by civilians. We are concerned to reduce the administrative load of police officers wherever possible.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many forms members of the Metropolitan police are required to fill in to order a new police car; what measures he proposes to take to reduce this number; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the ordering of a new car by the Metropolitan police requires the completion of only a single order form — often covering a number of vehicles — by a member of the chief engineer's department. No police officer is involved where an existing vehicle is being replaced. When an additional car is considered to be needed, two further forms have to be completed: an application by the officer making the request, supported by the detailed justification of the case for an increase. I do not consider that this documentation is excessive.

EC (Broadcasting Directive)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the outcome of his discussions with the EEC Commission on the proposed broadcasting directive; and from what article of the Treaty of Rome the proposed directive stems.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We had a broad exchange of views with the commissioner responsible, Lord Cockfield, on the likely content of the draft directive and the purposes behind it. In presenting its proposal, the European Commission has referred in particular to articles 57(2) and 66 of the Treaty of Rome, but the precise powers under which any directive might be made would be a matter for decision by the Council at the time.

Community Radio

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make an announcement on the application for a licence for a community radio station in Hackney; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) and the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) on 6 May 1986, at columns 19.

Terrorism (Remanded Persons)

Mr McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the number of days spent on remand by those remanded in custody for terrorist-type offences in 1985 with regard to cases now completed in England and Wales, the number of bail applications and the number that were refused, respectively;

(2) what was the average number of days spent on remand by those remanded in custody for terrorist-type

offences in England and Wales in 1984 with regard to cases now completed; how many applications for bail were received; and how many were refused.

Mr. Mellor: The only information which is readily available relates to prisoners who are now in prison custody in category A. It does not cover prisoners who have been released or downgraded.

The average number of days spent on remand by prisoners first received in custody in 1984 was 303. Eight applications for bail are recorded; all were refused.

Of those prisoners first received in custody in 1985 the cases of two have been completed, both spent a total of 399 days on remand; our records show that one made two unsuccessful applications for bail.

ENERGY

Petrol Prices

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will investigate regional variations in the reduction in petrol prices following the general fall in oil prices.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith My Department keeps in close touch with developments in oil product prices. Regional variations in petrol prices are now narrowing. Competition matters are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Sellafield (Radiation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list every leak or accident and discharge of radiation from Sellafield since the plant began to operate.

Mr. Goodlad: I have asked the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc to write to the hon. Member on this matter.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy, what is the cost of British Nuclear Fuels proposed advertising compaign to inform the public about the safety and benefit of nuclear power.

Mr. Peter Walker: BNFL has always held exhibitions and distributed educational material to inform the public about the nuclear power industry and its role in it. I understand that it intends to increase this programme over the coming year in order that the full facts about its operations are explained to the public.

EMPLOYMENT

Basildon Local Enterprise Agency

61. **Mr. Amess** asked the Paymaster General how many new businesses Basildon local enterprise agency has helped start up since its inception.

Mr. Trippier: Local enterprise agencies, such as Basildon local enterprise agency, are clearly making a significant contribution to encouraging small firm formation at the local level. However, the information currently held by my Department on Basildon local enterprise agency does not include details of how many new small businesses the agency has claimed to have helped set up since its inception.

Small Businesses

62. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Paymaster General what was the number of small businesses established in the last 12-month period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: There were around 180,000 business start-ups in 1984, based on the number of VAT registrations. Estimates for 1985 are not yet available, but early indications are that there was a broadly similar number of start-ups in 1985.

The starting of over 1 million new businesses in the six years to the end of 1985 is encouraging, but there are no grounds for complacency, since the numbers which cease to trade are also high.

New Workers Scheme

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General if he will consider amending the regulations for the new workers scheme to prevent an employer from substituting a subsidised worker by another at the end of 52 weeks.

Mr. Lang: We recognise that under any scheme where we have many thousands of employers participating there is the possibility of some employers not retaining an employee beyond the support period of the scheme. However, our experience of the young workers scheme has been that the majority of young people remain with their employer once support under the scheme has ended. We have no reason to think tha the number of young people kept on after a period of new workers scheme support will be significantly different.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General what consideration he has given to the proposed amendment to rule *(e)* of the new workers scheme put forward to him by the Institute of Careers Officers.

Mr. Lang: A condition of the new workers scheme is that on the day the young person starts employment with the employer making the application for new workers scheme support, he or she must be unable to find a suitable YTS continuation place.

As I have advised the Institute of Careers Officers, the new workers scheme is primarily aimed at 18 to 20-year-olds who are no longer eligible for YTS. However, those young people still eligible but who are not able to find a suitable YTS continuation place may be eligible for new workers scheme, because they are no longer able to take advantage of YTS. The careers service has been issued with the rules of the scheme and general guidance. It is for the careers service and jobcentres to determine, dependent on local circumstances, what is or is not suitable for a particular individual.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Forman asked the Paymaster General if he will pubish information available to him from surveys of the total work force which show graduate unemployment rates as compared with the average for the population as a whole in each of the years from 1970 to the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: The available information derived from censuses of population and labour force surveys is as follows:

Unemployment rates in Great Britain

per cent.

	Census of population		*Labour Force Survey*	
	*Rate among economically active**		*Rate among economically active†*	
	population	*graduates‡*	*population*	*graduates‡*
1971	4·9	2·0	—	—
1981	9·4	3·4	9·7	4·0
1983	—	—	11·7	4·9
1984	—	—	11·2	4·4
1985	—	—	10·7	4·2

* 1971: those aged 18-69. 1981: those aged 18 and over.

† 1981: those aged 16-59. 1983: those aged 16 and over 1984 and 1985: men aged 16-64; women aged 16-59.

‡ those with university degrees or equivalent qualifications.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General what is the maximum amount of earnings a person who works for 15 hours in three working days can earn and still be able to claim unemployment benefit for the other three working days in the week.

Mr. Lang: Entitlement to unemployment benefit is determined on a daily basis. Benefit is not payable if earnings exceed £2. Earnings on days worked do not affect entitlement on other days in the week unless, in the opinion of the independent adjudicating authorities, they are derived from employment which can be regarded as continuous and from which the earnings exceed £2 on the daily average.

Community Programme

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Paymaster General if he will consider extending the community programme for two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The period of employment for participants on the community programme is normally limited to one year and I have no present plans to change this arrangement. However, managers, supervisors and other key workers may be retained for over 12 months where there are no suitable replacements from amongst eligible long-term unemployed people.

SCOTLAND

Radiation

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take to increase the supply of information to the public concerning radiation levels and future trends in those levels.

Mr. Ancram: As my right hon. and learned Friend said in reply to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 8 May, at columns *217-19*, the Scottish Office took early and positive steps to provide information to the public on radioactivity levels in Scotland since the Chernobyl incident. The coverage of the monitoring includes a range of radionuclides, and areas of sampling include radioactivity on grass and in free-range eggs. Information is being made available to the public daily. Monitoring and the publication of results will continue for as long as necessary.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the names of the experts dealing with radiation problems in his Department, indicating their expertise in each case.

Mr. Ancram: The following professional officers in the Scottish Office deal with matters relating to radiation. Their expertise is derived from professional training, from working in the Department and from other relevant experience, which includes work in industry or in other Government Departments.

H. M. Industrial Pollution Inspectorate

I. W. W. Wright, BSc, DRCST, CEng, MIChemE, CChem, MRSC, Chief Inspector
J. A. Hetherington, BSc, MInst P, Deputy Chief Inspector
D. A. Dickson, BSc, CEng, MIChemE, Senior Inspector
Dr. D. N. S. Dixon, BSc, PhD, Senior Inspector
M. Curtis, BSc, DMS, CEng, MIChemE, Inspector
Dr. F. Forbes, BSc, PhD, Inspector
Dr. I. R. Hall, BSc, PhD, AFFIWPC, Inspector
G. H. Hunter, BSc, PhD, CChem, MRSC, Inspector
I. M. Liddle, BSc, LRSC, Inspector
Dr. G. W. Lodge, BSc, ARCS, DIC, PhD, MIIM, MBIM, Inspector
Dr. D. G. Thackrah, MA, PhD, Inspector
J. Wilson, BSc, CChem, MRSC, Inspector

Medical Services

Dr. A. D. McIntyre, MB, ChB, DPH, FFCM, DTM & H, DIH, MRCP (Ed), Principal Medical Officer
Dr. D. C. Morrison, BA, MA, PhD, Principal Scientific Officer
Dr. G. Gilray, MB, ChB, DPH, FFCM, Senior Medical Officer
Dr. S. I. Forbes, FRALMA, FACOM, MFCM, LRCS & P, DPH, DIH, DTM & H, DMSA

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the highest level of radioactivity expressed in becquerels per litre, found in rainwater in Scotland since the Chernobyl incident; and how this compares with the internationally agreed safety limit.

Mr. Ancram: The highest levels of radioactivity in a sample of collected rainwater in Scotland since the Chernobyl incident were detected on 4 May. They are set out in the table.

Radionuclide	*Activity becquerels per litre*
Barium 140	1,050
Caesium 134	1,650
Caesium 137	2,650
Iodine 131	9,400
Iodine 132	7,600
Technetium 99	400
Tellurium 132	10,000

The most significant of these readings in radiological terms is that for Iodine-131. An individual drinking only undiluted rainwater at the level of 9,400 becquerels per litre would have reached the internationally recommended lower emergency level, at which authorities should consider the need for action, of 50 millisieverts per year for the thyroid gland in just over 48 hours. The upper emergency level, at which it is recommended internationally that authorities should be banning the drinking of such water, is ten times as high, at 500 millisieverts. The Government issued advice to the public on 5 May that it would be desirable for the next week to avoid drinking fresh rainwater continuously. This advice was withdrawn on 10 May, because activity in rainwater fell very quickly and was by that date at very low levels.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Research and Development

16. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current situation for research and development funding from his Department.

Mr. Pattie: My Department plans to spend £415 million in 1986-87 on support for research and development.

22. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much of his Department's spending is allocated to research and development.

Mr. Pattie: My Department plans to spend £415 million in 1986-87 on support for research and development. This accounts for 32 per cent. of the total budget of £1,302 million.

Motor Vehicle Registrations

17. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received regarding the proposed change in the anniversary of the motor vehicle registration prefix; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have received representations from individual manufacturers, including BL, and from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders generally supporting an October changeover; and from the Motor Agents Association and individual motor traders calling for July to be the month of change.

Manufactures

18. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total deficit in trade in manufactures with the EEC and the rest of the world, respectively, over the most recent 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months ending March 1986 there was a deficit with the European Community of £9·2 billion and a surplus with the rest of the world of £5·9 billion.

Fleet Support King Vessel

19. **Mr. Bagier** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has had any discussion with British Shipbuilders about the construction of a fleet support King vessel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: British Shipbuilders has kept my right hon. Friend fully informed of the development of the fleet support King design, and of its market potential. While the Royal Navy has no requirement at present for a vessel of this kind, British Shipbuilders is actively seeking overseas possibilities for this design. We will give it every support in its efforts.

British Steel Corporation

20. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the chairman of the British Steel Corporation to discuss the board's investment programme; and if he will make a statement.

23. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when next he will meet the chairman-elect of the British Steel Corporation to discuss the prospects for the steel industry in Scotland.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend met Mr. Scholey for a general discussion on 17 March 1986. A further meeting has not been fixed.

Conference Trade

21. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on subsidies offered to the conference trade by Governments in other EC member states.

Mr. Alan Clark: We have received representations about a subsidy offered by the Dutch Government to their conference industry. We are raising this matter formally with the European Commission. No evidence has been put to us of similar subsidies in other EC member states.

EC Exports (American Sanctions)

24. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what talks he has had recently with the United States Administration on possible United States sanctions against European Economic Community exports, including Scotch whisky; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer to the reply which I gave on 8 May to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). During his visit to Washington on 27-29 April my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State sought to dissuade the Administration from taking action against Community exports, and made clear that the Community would have to respond to any such action.

A330 and A340 Airbus

25. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has had concerning the A330 and A340 Airbus project.

Mr. Pattie: My right hon. Friend and I have received representations from various quarters, including Airbus Industrie and British Aerospace, that the Government should support the Airbus A330-A340 projects. AI and its industrial partners, including BAe, will be reviewing progress on the projects at a number of meetings over the next few weeks. My Department will be maintaining close contact with them, and our Airbus partner Governments, as the proposals evolve. However, until Airbus Industrie and the industrial partners have completed their detailed studies of the A330-A340 projects and reached their own conclusions, it is premature to expect Governments to reach a view on the projects.

South Korea

26. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the development of United Kingdom trade with South Korea.

Mr. Alan Clark: United Kingdom trade with the Republic of Korea is already significant, but I would like to see our exports grow still faster. We are encouraging easier market access and United Kingdom companies must exploit the opportunities.

United Kingdom Exports (America)

27. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate he has made of the cost to United Kingdom exporters of the recent United States of America requirement that certain package consignments to the United States have now to go through a United States customs broker.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not possible to quantify the likely cost to the United Kingdom textiles industry of the measures recently introduced by United States Customs which revise United States informal entry procedures for textile imports.

Domestic Motor Market

28. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on import penetration of the domestic motor market.

Mr. Butcher: In the first four months of 1986 figures released by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders show that import penetration in the domestic car market had fallen to 55·1 per cent. This is the lowest level recorded in a corresponding period for four years and compares with an overall figure of 58·1 per cent. for 1985. The fall in the share of the United Kingdom car market taken by imports this year is due to a more favourable pattern of sourcing adopted by the multinational car companies, a situation which I trust will persist.

BSC (Industry) Ltd.

29. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the role of BSC (Industry) Ltd. in generating employment in areas affected by steel plant closures.

Mr. Butcher: Yes. BSC (Industry) Ltd. has a commendable record of job creation in steel closure areas; and I applaud the efforts of all concerned. The main function of the company now is to support business opportunity teams, operating in 18 designated areas. The company also converts old industrial buildings into smaller starter workshops. BSC (Industry) Ltd. reports having received over 20,000 inquiries since 1978. Two thousand businesses have been assisted; and these are committed to creating some 50,000 jobs by March 1987.

British Leyland and General Motors

30. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to allow further negotiations between BL and GM.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The position remains as outlined in my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 25 March.

Polycad Scheme

31. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the aims and objectives of the Polycad scheme.

Mr. Pattie: The aim of the Polycad scheme has been, at a cost to my Department of £3 million, to enable all students on electrical and electronic engineering degree courses at polytechnics and other colleges to gain hands-on experience in the use of computer aided design (CAD) techniques for the design of silicon integrated circuits. The scheme complements and builds on arrangements made by the University Grants Committee for the provision of equivalent facilities in universities. In helping to equip graduates with the skills needed to promote the application of information technology in United Kingdom industry the scheme represents a significant contribution by my Department in Industry Year to furthering collaboration between education and industry.

British Shipbuilders

32. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when next he plans to meet the chairman of British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend often meets the chairman of British Shipbuilders. He last met Phillip Hares on Thursday 1 May.

40. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current state of orders for British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Dumfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on Tuesday 6 May 1986, which listed current orders won since January 1985.

Bankruptcies

33. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many bankruptcies there have been in the last 12 months.

Mr. Butcher: The information asked for was published on page 138 of *British Business* dated 18 April 1986, which is available in the Library.

Domestic Power Plant Industry

34. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the financial assistance available to the domestic power plant industry in seeking overseas orders.

Mr. Alan Clark: All Government schemes of financial assistance for exporters are available to the power plant industry and it has made considerable use of them. More than a third of the aid and trade provision has been used to support projects in the power sector and my Department is in regular discussion with individual manufacturers about the scope for ATP grant or soft loan assistance for their sales efforts in increasingly competitive overseas markets.

USA (Ministerial Visit)

35. **Mr. John Browne** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his recent official visit to the United States of America.

Mr. Channon: I visited Washington and New York between 27 and 30 April. In Washington, I discussed a wide range of trade issues with members of the United States Administration and of Congress. In New York, I paid visits to the British trade development office and to Salomon Brothers; I also attended a lunch with the British American chamber of commerce.

Shipbuilding Industry

36. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current state of negotiations in Brussels over the provisions of aid to the shipbuilding industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Commission has only just begun preliminary work on arrangements to replace the fifth directive on aid to shipbuilding. We have asked the Commission to ensure that its proposals for the next regime take account of the various subsidies for shipbuilding in member states. I am assured that the Commission is hard at work along these lines.

Manufacturing

37. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the level of manufacturing over the last 12 months.

Mr. Butcher: Provisional data suggest that manufacturing output in the three months to February 1986 (the latest available) was 1 per cent. higher than in 1984. Manufacturing output has shown uninterrupted growth since 1981 and is 11·5 per cent. up on the 1981 first quarter trough. A further 3 per cent. growth is expected this year.

Steel Imports

38. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what tonnage of steel, of what type, and from which countries has been imported into the United Kingdom in each of the last two years.

Mr. Butcher: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom steel imports: 1984 and 1985—main products and country of origin*

1,000 tonnes

	Belgium/ Luxembourg		*France*		*Federal Republic of Germany*		*Italy*		*Netherlands*		*Spain*		*Sweden*		*Other countries*		*All countries*	
	1984	*1985*	*1984*	*1985*	*1984*	*1985*	*1984*	*1985*	*1984*	*1985*	*1984*	*1985*	*1984*	*1985*	*1984*	*1985*	*1984*	*1985*
Ingots, blooms, billets and slabs	10	8	13	9	73	64	9	7	97	92	9	7	17	13	38	40	266	240
Bars and rods	41	42	73	67	76	80	39	40	30	34	45	32	69	72	98	110	471	476
Heavy sections and sheet piling	44	40	8	9	3	6	4	**	6	4	23	11	1	1	68	85	156	155
Hot rolled strip	59	93	50	46	396	403	30	29	48	55	1	**	6	7	74	136	663	769
Uncoated plate	47	40	29	21	52	29	3	10	7	8	8	19	53	49	110	143	308	319
Uncoated sheet	97	96	37	59	147	180	36	47	131	133	10	16	12	15	104	110	572	656
Coated plate and sheet	76	90	37	64	68	86	5	11	12	13	9	12	21	35	33	44	261	355
Tinplate including TFS	10	8	22	28	32	40	5	4	60	66	4	5	**	**	24	26	158	176
Cold rolled strip	15	13	19	21	58	61	4	4	1	1	**	**	4	5	14	12	115	118
Tubes and pipes	20	15	47	16	85	82	50	60	40	55	2	1	16	17	124	74	385	318
Other	16	14	15	15	27	26	49	31	1	2	28	27	10	10	41	44	187	168
Total	434	460	348	353	1,017	1,055	235	242	432	463	140	130	210	222	727	823	3,543	3,749

Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau—United Kingdom Trade: Table 45.

Notes:

a. Imports are valued cif.

b. Due to rounding, the sum of the columns and rows may not exactly equal the totals.

* Provisional.

** Figures are less than 0·5 of the last digit shown.

Steel Industry

39. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current situation within the steel industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The United Kingdom steel industry, once heavily subsidised and inefficient, is now among the most competitive in Europe. Since 1979 productivity has improved by 94 per cent., a remarkable transformation. Prospects for the future, for both the British Steel Corporation and private sector steel companies, depend on their continuing ability to compete and on the market for their products, but I believe that sustained viability and profitability is a realistic ambition.

59. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total value of investment in the special or engineering steel industry in 1984 and in 1985; what is the level proposed for 1986; and what assessment he makes as to the adequacy of the volume of such investment in relation to competition from other European Economic Community member states.

Mr. Butcher: I regret the information sought is not available in the form requested. United Kingdom engineering steel producers will need to take into account competition from other European Community producers in determining their future investment programmes.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

41. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current state of negotiations on the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The GATT textiles committee met to discuss the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement on 3 April. There will be a further meeting in early June. Negotiations on a protocol need to be concluded by the end of July when the MFA expires. I intend to remain in close touch with the industry and other interested parties.

Industrial Management

42. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his policy towards reforms in industrial management, in the light of the report of the Confederation of British Industry entitled "Change to Succeed — Action Now", acopy of which has been forwarded to him.

Mr. Butcher: I welome the report of the Confederation of British Industry as a contribution towards improving the United Kingdom's industrial performance. As the CBI recognises, the main responsibility for this lies with business and its management. The report calls for changes in business attitudes, and in particular for increased investment by companies in training and management development. My Department is actively engaged for its part, with the Manpower Services Commission and others, in seeking to promote such changes.

Filament Synthetic Cloth

43. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about imports into the United Kingdom of filament synthetic cloth.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have received representations about disruption to the industry from low-cost imports of certain filament synthetics from Indonesia. I have also received representations from other companies in the industry that imports of polyester georgette, which falls in the same MFA category, should not be restricted as it is not produced in the United Kingdom.

British Steel

44. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the prospects for British Steel.

Mr. Butcher: The United Kingdom steel industry, once heavily subsidised and inefficient, is now among the most efficient in Europe. Since 1979 productivity has improved by 94 per cent., a remarkable transformation. Prospects for the future, for both the British Steel Corporation and private sector steel companies, depend on their ability to compete and on the market for their products, but I believe that sustained viability and profitability is a realistic ambition.

EUREKA Programme

45. **Mr. Michael Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made on the EUREKA programme.

Mr. Pattie: The EUREKA initiative was launched in July 1985. Substantial progress has already been achieved in making EUREKA a practical framework to encourage European industrial collaboration on high technology projects. I hope that this will be noted and endorsed by the next EUREKA ministerial conference in London on 30 June, to which we expect that a substantial number of new collaborative projects will be reported.

Manufactured Goods

46. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will indicate the nature and size of the current deficit in the balance of trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Butcher: In the first quarter there was a deficit of £1·4 billion. In the same period the current account as a whole showed a surplus of £900,000.

United States Exports (Controls)

47. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent advice he has given to British companies potentially affected by the changes in United States regulations introduced on 24 April further to control the export and re-export of technology.

Mr. Alan Clark: The advice given by this Department continues to be that companies and persons doing business in the United Kingdom should be guided by United Kingdom law and their own commercial judgment.

Exports

48. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give figures for each of the past five years of *(a)* invisible and *(b)* visible exports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom Exports and Invisible Credits

£ billion

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Visible Exports	51·0	55·6	60·8	70·4	78·1
Invisible Credits					
Exports of Services	16·9	17·5	19·6	22·0	24·8
Other Credits	39·7	47·2	45·6	54·5	55·2

Community Trade Marks Office

49. **Mr. Iain Mills** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he will make to support London's bid to house the Community Trade Marks Office.

Mr. Pattie: The Government stepped up their efforts to secure the Community office for London on 29 April by publishing a brochure describing London's advantages and explaining the sites available. I, other Ministers and officials and United Kingdom interests, will be active in support of our bid. In particular, we shall be speaking to

the European Commission, to our opposite numbers in other Governments, to Members of the European Parliament and to foreign correspondents. It is the Government's intention that the case for London should get the widest possible publicity and support.

Design Excellence

50. **Mr. Squire** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what new initiatives his Department is taking to promote excellence in design.

Mr. Butcher: In addition to the Department's continuing work in established areas to promote design, there have already been two major new initiatives in 1986.

The first was the Department's design commitment conference in January to enlist the help of the top managers of 80 of the United Kingdom's leading companies to work with their suppliers and others to increase exploitation of good design in industry and commerce.

The second is a major national advertising campaign organised by the Design Council with funding from the Department. This was launched in April and is aimed at increasing management awareness of the contribution good design can make to company competitiveness.

Inward Investment

51. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his Department's estimate of the number of jobs created by inward investment since 1980.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Department estimates that, as a result of the inward investment decisions notified to the Invest in Britain Bureau within the years 1980 to 1985, some 110,000 jobs will be created and many more have been safeguarded.

Takeovers

52. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet the Director General of Fair Trading to discuss the recent spate of takeovers.

Mr. Channon: I meet the Director General regularly to discuss a range of questions within his responsibilities. The date of the next meeting has not yet been arranged.

Self-Changing Gears Ltd.

53. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now make a statement on the privatisation of Self-Changing Gears Ltd. from BL to Cummins Engines.

Mr. Peter Morrison: BL announced on 21 April that agreement in principle had been reached on the acquisition of Self-Changing Gears Ltd. by the Cummins Engine Company. The BL board had examined a number of options but concluded that the offer from Cummins was the most competitive and in the best long-term interests of the company.

US Investment

54. **Mr. Sayeed** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of United States direct investment into the European Community is located in Britain.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The latest figures available from the United States Department of Commerce show that in 1984 the United Kingdom had a 36 per cent. share of accumulated United States foreign direct investment into the European Community, excluding oil. Including oil, this figure rises to 41 per cent., equivalent to over $32·1 billion of investment.

These figures and other reporting on the United Kingdom's significant success in attracting inward investment are published in the Invest in Britain Bureau's annual report for 1985. A copy of the report is available in the House of Commons Library.

Director General of Fair Trading

55. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the Director General of Fair Trading.

Mr. Channon: My last meeting with the Director General was held on 10 March.

Radio Frequencies

56. **Mr. Tinn** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received regarding proposed changes in radio frequencies allocated for industrial purposes.

Mr. Pattie: There is a problem of local interference from some industrial devices operating in the 900 MHz band now used for cellular radiotelephones. No representations as such have been received in this matter, but it is clearly of concern to the industrial users that a frequency change might prove necessary.

Monopolies and Mergers

57. **Mr. Wrigglesworth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the progress of his review of monopolies and mergers policy.

Mr. Channon: The review of competition law and policy has not yet begun and an announcement will be made shortly.

Unit Labour Costs

58. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest figures available for the year-on-year increase in unit labour costs in manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany and Japan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: In 1985 the increases in unit labour costs (in national currencies) in manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, United States of America, Germany and Japan were 5·5 per cent., 1·5 per cent., 0 per cent. and 0 per cent. respectively. It is discouraging that the United Kingdom's unit labour costs are rising significantly faster than in main competitor countries and, therefore, adversely affecting competitiveness and ultimately jobs. It is essential that both sides of industry recognise the need for realistic pay deals and improved productivity.

Rolls-Royce

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's plans for the privatisation of Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Pattie: Subject to market conditions, the Government intend to return Rolls-Royce to the private sector in the first half of 1987.

Council of Ministers Meeting

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Council of Ministers' meeting on consumer affairs which took place on 6 May.

Mr. Howard: I attended the Council on 6 May, which was the first on consumer affairs to be held under the Netherlands presidency.

The Council unanimously adopted a resolution concerning the future orientation of the policy of the European Economic Community for the protection and promotion of consumer interests. This resolution followed the Commission's communication to the Council in August 1985 entitled "A new impetus for consumer protection policy," which had been discussed at the previous Internal Market/Consumer Protection Council on 12 December 1985.

The resolution welcomed the Commission's communication, particularly the intention to give priority to proposals concerned with providing a high level of consumer safety and with creating an increased ability for consumers to benefit from the Community market. It also highlighted the important objective of taking greater account of consumers' interest in other Community policies, especially those concerned with completion of the internal market, and in particular regarding improvements to the quality of products and services, and agricultural policy, competition and transport. The resolution invited the Commission to report to the Council on how it intends to achieve this objective.

The Council also stated in the resolution that it considered that any future proposals from the Commission for legislation should focus on those areas which have a real Community dimension and emphasised that it was important that alternative approaches to legislation should be promoted whenever they offered real opportunities for progress. The Commission was also requested, when preparing its proposals, to consult widely with all who may have an interest in them.

This resolution represents a significant and welcome change to Community policy on consumer matters. It should ensure that not only will the consumer interest be given a higher profile in the more important Community decisions in future but that there will be a better balance between the provision of essential consumer protection and the avoidance of unnecessary burdens on business.

The Council also had further discussions on proposals for directives on consumer credit and on unit pricing, concluding that further work should continue on both proposals in the respective working groups.

Soviet Union (Tourism)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what representations he has received from people with package tours booked to the Soviet Union about the terms of cancellation of tours and the eligibility for refunds, in the light of the Government's advice to avoid travelling to certain areas of the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will initiate urgent discussions with tour companies with a view to ensuring that they observe a common practice in repayment of deposits to travellers cancelling visits to the Soviet Union on the basis of Her Majesty's Government's advice in the light of the recent nuclear accident at Chernobyl; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 May 1986, c. *410*]: I have received no representations concerning the cancellation of package tours to the Soviet Union, nor am I planning to initiate discussions with tour companies on the subject of repayment of deposits. Such matters will be governed by the terms of individual contracts between travellers and tour operators by the terms of any insurance arrangements and by any particular voluntary agreements reached by the parties to those contracts in the special circumstances.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Imports

Mr. Terlezki asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what type of agricultural products are imported into the United Kingdom from the Ukraine, Bielorussia, and from the Soviet Union in general *(a)* in canned form, *(b)* as fresh products and *(c)* as bakery and confectionery; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The trade statistics do not distinguish between imports from different parts of the Soviet Union. However, in 1985, imports from the Soviet Union were recorded under the following agricultural and food headings:

Trade heading	*Type of food*	*1985 value £ million*
00 Live animals chiefly for food	n/r	n/r
01 Meat and meat preparations	Prepared or preserved poultrymeat and offal	*
02 Dairy products and eggs	n/r	n/r
03 Fish and fish preparations	Frozen fish and prepared or preserved salmon	8·1
04 Cereals and cereal preparations	n/r	n/r
05 Vegetables and fruit	Dried beans; Prepared or preserved cucumbers and gherkins; Dates (fresh or dried); Dried grapes and peaches; Jams and jellies	0·1
06 Sugar, sugar preparations and honey	Honey	*

Trade heading	Type of food	1985 value £ million
07 Coffee, tea, cocoa and spices	Tea	1·9
08 Feedingstuffs for animals	n/r	n/r
09 Miscellaneous	Canned corn	*
Total Section 0		10·1

* Less than £50,000.
n/r=None recorded.

Action on imports from the Eastern bloc is currently under consideration by member states.

Milk

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much milk has been thrown away in Scotland and the North of England since the beginning of May.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing annual expenditure under the common agricultural policy each year since 1972 in terms of the European currency unit and the then open market rate for sterling, the increase of expenditure since 1972 each year in real terms, the proportion of the budget each year devoted to the common agricultural policy and the amount received by the United Kingdom each year under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Jopling: The information requested is set out in the following table:

	CAP expenditure		Year on year increase in real terms	CAP expenditure as a percentage of total EC expenditure	United Kingdom receipts under the CAP*†
	mecu	£ million*	per cent.	per cent.	£ million
1973	3,805	1,912	—	82	63
1974	3,230	1,647	−24	75	112
1975	4,708	2,637	+27	78	347
1976	5,796	3,603	+11	77	213
1977	7,123	4,656	+12	74	174
1978	9,000	5,974	+17	79	318
1979	10,880	7,064	+11	76	384
1980	11,943	7,232	−1	73	569
1981	11,581	6,449	−12	65	666
1982	13,077	7,294	+3	64	756
1983	16,637	9,759	+18	69	1,085
1984	19,093	11,150	+9	73	1,310
1985	20,575	11,757	+3	n.a.	1,185

Sources: 1973-84 EC Court of Auditors reports.
EC Commission EAGGF Financial Reports.
1985 MAFF estimates.

* Conversion to sterling at the average rate for the EAGGF guarantee section for each year except 1985 for which the budget rate has been used (1·75 ecu: £1).

† Figures in ecus for expenditure under the CAP funded outside the EAGGF are not available for the years 1973-77. Figures for United Kingdom receipts of this expenditure are also not available for all years. However, in both cases the amounts are negligible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each product the increase in farm support prices this year in the United Kingdom in terms of sterling, together with the increase in productivity expected on the basis of past trends.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Intervention Storage (Costs)

Mr. Deakins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why he agreed a reduction in European Economic Community reimbursement to member states for national expenditure on the financing and technical costs of intervention storage: what estimate he has made of the effect on United Kingdom public expenditure in 1986-87: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: These reductions formed part of a package of measures designed to offset additional Community expenditure in 1986 and to keep expenditure within the financial guideline in 1987. The United Kingdom supports these objectives. The effect of the reductions on United Kingdom public expenditure is expected to be broadly neutral as the reduction in receipts will be offset by lower contributions to the Community budget.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether West Germany has been authorised to take national measures to help its farmers as a result of the price settlement under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Bees

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the changes in the numbers of Britain's bee population over the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 12 May 1986, c. *372*]: From the latest information available my Department estimates that at the end of the 1985 season there were approximately 237,000 bee colonies in Great Britain compared with 235,000 12 months earlier.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iran and Iraq (Armaments)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the export of spare armament parts to Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Etterick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on 29 October 1985 at column *454*. There has been no change in our policy since then.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Betting Duty

Mr. Dubs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received in support of the abolition or reduction of on-course greyhound betting duty.

Mr. Brooke: A number of racing and betting bodies have urged the abolition or reduction of on-course betting duty generally. The British Greyhound Racing Board specifically came to see me in advance of the Budget.

EC Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1973 the gross amount contributed by the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community budget as a percentage of the gross total, the share of the European Economic Community value added tax base accounted for by the United Kingdom value added tax and contribution, the formula for calculating the United Kingdom rebate, and the amount of the rebate; and if he will provide an estimate for the current year and a forecast for 1987.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Gross United Kingdom contribution Percentage*	**United Kingdom share Percentage*
1973	8·8	—
1974	11·0	—
1975	13·6	—
1976	16·2	—
1977	19·2	—
1978	†15·4	‡16·8
1979	†17·5	18·5
1980	20·5	17·2
1981	21·5	19·5
1982	24·2	23·0
1983	22·1	19·5
1984	‖21·8	20·8
¶1985	‖23·2	22·9

Source: Court of Auditors' reports.

* United Kingdom VAT on GNP-related payments as a proportion of total VAT or GNP-related payments in the Community.

† After extra-budgetary financial compensation under art 131 of accession treaty.

‡ GNP share.

‖ Excluding IGA payments. If these were included, the 1984 figure would still be 21·8 per cent. after rounding. The 1985 figure would be 23·1 per cent.

¶ Estimated.

The formula for calculating the United Kingdom rebates in 1980 and 1981 is set out in the Council conclusions of 30 May 1980, published in OJ C158, 27 June 1980, of which a copy is in the Library of the House. The size of the rebates for 1982 and 1983 was agreed by negotiation. The "risk-sharing" formula for 1982 is set out in Council regulation 624/83 (OJ C73 March 1983). The size of the abatement in 1984 was agreed by negotiation. The total (gross) amounts received in respect of each year were:

Year	*£ million*
1980	790
1981	1,011
1982	807
1983	589
1984	605

The formula for calculating the United Kingdom's abatement under the Fontainebleau system is set out in the "Own Resources Decision" of 7 May 1985 (Cmnd. 9549). The latest estimate for the abatement due in respect of 1985 and paid in 1986 is £1,220 million (1,900 mecu). It is likely that the Commission will include in the 1987 PDB provision for our abatement due in respect of 1986 and paid in 1987 of £1,050 million (1,640 mecu). This will need to be corrected in the light of outturn information on our contributions and receipts in 1986. The United Kingdom does not contribute towards its own abatements. It did, however, have to contribute towards budget refunds.

EC (Expenditure)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the recent increase in the value added tax contribution to the EEC budget will be taken up by an increase in non-agricultural spending after allowing for the growth of own resources in real terms; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the increase in EEC expenditure in real terms each year since 1979 in relation to the increase in United Kingdom Government expenditure.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. 99]: The following table shows the increase (after allowing for inflation) in VAT own resources payments and expenditure

other than that on agricultural guarantee between 1985 and 1986. The increase in expenditure is a little over 70 per cent. of the increase in VAT contributions.

*million ecu**

	1985	*1986*	*Difference*
Expenditure other than on agricultural guarantee	8,478	†11,214	2,736
VAT own resources contributions‡‖	15,462	†19,240	3,778

* In 1985 prices assuming an EC10 inflation rate of 4·1 per cent. in 1986 (latest Commission estimate).
† According to Council's second reading budget.
‡ Includes GNP contributions paid by Greece.
‖ In 1985 part of the Community budget was financed by an IGA. Total VAT and IGA payments were 17,444 mecu. The difference between VAT payments in 1986 (in 1985 prices) and VAT plus IGA payments in 1985 was 1,796 mecu.

The following table shows a comparison between increases in United Kingdom public expenditure and Community budget expenditure.

Annual percentage increase in United Kingdom public expenditure planning total in 1979-80 prices

	Percentage
1979-80	1·0
1980-81	0·5
1981-82	2·1
1982-83	1·9
1983-84	1·6
1984-85	3·5
1985-86*	−2·6
1986-87†	0·1

* Estimate outturn.
† Plans.

Annual percentage increase in Community expenditure in 1979 prices

	Percentage
1979	8·9
1980	0·7
1981	−1·2
1982	4·2
1983	10·4
1984	6·9
1985	−1·7
1986	10·4

Note:
The growth rates for Community expenditure have been calculated from a current price series of Community spending deflated by the GDP deflator at market prices measured in ecu for a Community of Ten (source: European Economy). Community spending in 1985 is based on the payment appropriations in the 1985 budget. The 1986 figure is based on the 1986 budget as agreed at the Council's second reading. The United Kingdom GDP deflator at market prices was used in deriving the constant price growth rates for United Kingdom public expenditure.

ENVIRONMENT

Protomised Timber

60. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had concerning the use of protomised timber in the construction industry.

Sir George Young I am not aware of any such representations to my Department.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many lorry loads of earth and other soil will be required to excavate the proposed nuclear waste dump at Fulbeck; over what period they will be excavated; and how many lorry loads per day this will entail consequently.

Mrs. Rumbold: Precise assessments for the period of construction of a facility are not possible until NIREX has indicated its preferred site, and its intended repository design and methods of transport. It is unlikely that the small amounts of earth to be excavated during geological investigations at Fulbeck will need to be removed from the site.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities and organisations which have made representations on the proposed special development order on nuclear dumping, specifying whether each has asked for it to be *(a)* not laid, *(b)* delayed, *(c)* changed by deletion of one particular site and *(d)* changed in some other way.

Mr. Waldegrave: County, district and parish councils from the areas concerned and other bodies, have made representations, making one or more of the requests mentioned by the hon. Member.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the nuclear waste storage depot at Harwell will be full; and what kind of waste is stored in it.

Mr. Waldegrave: Harwell provides only temporary storage for low-level waste awaiting transit. It also stores waste originally destined for sea disposal. Other intermediate-level waste is stored at Harwell and present capacity is expected to be filled by about 1989. Plans are currently in hand to extend this.

Housing Waiting List

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions his Department has held with local authorities about the position of people who are forced to move from a borough in which they have lived due to the effects of the regulations of bed-and-breakfast accommodation, as to their rights to remain on the council housing waiting list; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Department has held no such discussions. The criteria for remaining on a local authority's housing waiting list are matters for each local authority to decide. I understand that surveys by the Department of Health and Social Security in various parts of the country, including London and the south-east, since changes in the relevant regulations, show barely any movements from one area to another of people receiving supplementary benefit board and lodging allowances.

Nitrates

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why Her Majesty's Government agreed to the incorporation in law of the principle that the polluter should pay for the cost of clearing the pollution created; and how he intends to implement this policy in relation to the pollution of public water supplies with nitrates.

Mrs. Rumbold: The polluter pays principle is not formally incorporated into United Kingdom law, although it is an aim of Government policy that the principle should be observed. This is reflected, for example, in parts of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. The Government also support the 1972 OECD and 1975 EC recommendations on the PPP, but these are not legally binding; nor do they require payment where discharges are within the level acceptable to the control authority. Nitrate enters public water supplies from a variety of sources, some of which present practical problems for the application of the PPP. However, the principle is already being observed by farmers who incur costs or lose revenue, in order to follow the requirements of the code of good agricultural practice so as to reduce the risk of nitrate pollution. This issue is one of several being considered further by the Nitrate Co-ordination Group.

Local Authorities (Accounting Procedures)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to introduce standard accounting procedures in local authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 28 February 1986, at column 736. Following my right hon. Friend's statement then, local government has the opportunity itself to take steps to secure greater standardisation in its accounts, building on the work which it is already doing.

Radiation

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish for each region the figures giving *(a)* normal background radiation, *(b)* background radiation for each day since 1 May, *(c)* the highest recorded radioactivity of a litre of milk, *(d)* the highest recorded radioactivity of a litre of rainwater and *(e)* the highest hypothetical dose received.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department, with the National Radiological Protection Board, has issued raw data on the levels of radiation detected at monitoring stations in the United Kingdom and a daily statement indicating in general terms the significance of these measurements. A statement was given to the press by my Department on 9 May 1986 and is available in the Library of the House. It gave estimates of the average dose levels to the public in the United Kingdom in the previous week, as a result of the accident at Chernobyl.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to increase the public supply of radiation monitoring equipment.

Mrs. Rumbold: No restrictions are placed on the purchase or sale of radiation monitoring equipment to the public. If sufficient demand exists manufacturers will respond.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to protect the public from the long-term effects of radionuclides that have settled on the soil.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department has already taken steps to let a research contract with UKAEA, Harwell to assess the longer-term effects of radioactivity deposited in the United Kingdom following the Chernobyl accident. The results will be made available to the public in due course.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government will take steps to standardise the units of measurement of radioactivity and dose limits; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Standard international units for radioactivity (becquerel) absorbed dose (gray) and dose equivalent (sievert) already exist. Reference may occasionally be made to the curie, rad and rem when quoting from older reports.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the monitoring that has been carried out in Britain as a result of the accident at Chernobyl.

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what instructions he has given to hospitals, universities and research laboratories using the national disposal service of Harwell on low-level nuclear waste and its collection; and what kinds of waste may be disposed of through normal non-nuclear rubbish collection;

(2) if he will list the institutions, laboratories and organisations at present producing low-level nuclear waste;

(3) if he will set out the collection procedures for low-level nuclear waste;

(4) what instructions he has given to hospitals, universities and research laboratories on collection and safety procedures for low-level nuclear waste;

(5) when he proposes to introduce compacting of nuclear waste at Drigg; and what assessment he has made of the costs of this;

(6) how many institutions use the national nuclear waste disposal service; what method of transport is used, and what are the annual costs of providing this service.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Homeless Persons

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to those foreign countries in which homeless persons are entitled to be rehoused.

Sir George Young: We have no comprehensive information about the position of homeless people in other countries.

Widdecombe Report

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the main report of the Widdecombe inquiry.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The report was submitted to me on 9 May. It is now being printed, together with its accompanying research volumes, and I expect it to be ready for publication in June.

DEFENCE

Libya (Cyprus Bases)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what part was played by Royal Air Force establishments in Cyprus in the recent United States Air Force air strike on Libya.

Mr. Stanley: It is not our normal practice to comment on operational matters, but in this instance I can confirm that British service establishments in Cyprus were not involved in the United States action against Libya.

Youth Training

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate how many YTS places will be taken up by his Department during the current year.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1986, c. *600*]: An error has been found. In 1985-86 the Ministry of Defence offered 876 places on the civilian YTS and not 1,125, the higher figure referred to the earlier year.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Domestic Violence

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Government have any plans to implement the proposal of the Select Committee on violence in marriage that there should be one refuge place per 10,000 of the population.

Mr. Whitney: Estimates of need and financial provision for refuge places are matters for local authorities which, under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, have a duty to provide accommodation for battered women with dependent children. Since the Select Committee on violence in marriage reported in 1975, the number of refuges in the United Kingdom known to the Government has risen from under 40 to some 220.

Immunisation

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations his Department has had regarding the low uptake of poliomyelitis, pertussis, measles, rubella and tetanus immunisation; and what replies have been given.

Mr. Whitney: Five letters have been received in the last year, including one from the right hon. Member. The replies have stressed the importance we attach to improving uptake of immunisation against these diseases.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the most recent figures for the uptake of poliomyelitis, pertussis, measles, rubella and tetanus immunisation by regions; and what steps he plans to take to bring the regions with the lowest uptake rates up to the level of those with the higher rates.

Mr. Whitney: The available information on uptake of immunisation is shown in the table. We will be considering with regional health authorities how low uptake might be tackled

Table Percentage Uptake Rates: 1984, England

Regional Health Authority	*Polio†*	*Pertussis†*	*Measles†*	*Rubella‡*	*Tetanus†*
England‖	84	65	63	86	84
Northern	85	63	68	*	85
Yorkshire	85	66	68	*	85
Trent	85	68	65	*	85
East Anglian	87	72	73	*	87
North West Thames	86	68	64	*	86
North East Thames	77	59	52	*	77
South East Thames‖	84	68	60	*	85
South West Thames	83	68	66	*	84
Wessex	91	72	75	*	91
Oxford	87	73	74	*	87
South Western	88	67	71	*	88
West Midlands	82	63	59	*	82
Mersey	80	54	57	*	79
North Western	81	55	53	*	82

* Satisfactory regional estimates for rubella are not available.
† The percentage of children born in 1982 who had been immunised by the end of 1984.
‡ The percentage of 14-year-old girls who had been immunised by the end of 1984.
‖ Incorporates estimates for South East Kent and Tunbridge Wells health districts which failed to supply information.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the cost-effectiveness of the poliomyelitis, pertussis, measles, rubella and tetanus elements of his Department's preventive medicine strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Studies of immunisation programmes against these diseases in other countries indicate that they are highly cost-effective. We consider that these findings are applicable to this country, but we nevertheless keep the need for such studies of our own programmes under review.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will redesign the preventive medicine strategy of his Department with a view to improving the uptake of immunisation.

Mr. Whitney: We see no need for this. Immunisation remains a key element in our prevention strategy. We

monitor uptake of health authority immunisations through performance indicators and the review system, and we are seeking further to strengthen this.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to require medical officers to submit an annual report on the steps being taken to improve the uptake of vaccine in their districts.

Mr. Whitney: We have asked district health authorities to designate an officer to be accountable for immunisation performance in the district. We would expect authorities to look to that officer for reports on the steps being taken to improve uptake of immunisation.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment his Department has made of the state of public awareness of the contra-indications to immunisation, if he will take steps to assist consultants, general practitioners and community physicians and nurses to improve this level of awareness by means of an education programme directed at the general public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Department attaches importance to public awareness of the contra-indications to immunisation and funds Health Education Council literature which explains the risks attaching to childhood immunisations. Doctors and community nurses have also been advised by the Department about the contra-indications to these immunisations and urged to discuss these matters with parents to help them make informed decisions.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to empower nurses to immunise at home children who have been missed in the normal immunisation arrangements; and if he will also arrange for these nurses to be indemnified appropriately, if necessary.

Mr. Whitney: These are matters for health authorities to decide as a matter of local policy, in discussion with the professionals concerned.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received in support of a meeting of experts in the field of immunisation to consider means of improving the immunisation uptake; and what consideration he has given to the suggestion that the disabilities study unit should convene such a meeting in association with his Department.

Mr. Whitney: We have been unable to trace any such suggestion but will consider it if it is made.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much research is being carried out into improving vaccines in the United Kingdom; and how much research is being carried out into improving the uptake of immunisation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Whitney: We understand that the Medical Research Council which receives grant-in-aid from the science vote of the Department of Education and Science is supporting research aimed at the development and improvement of vaccines for hepatitis, herpes virus, influenza virus, respiratory syncytial virus, rubella, measles, varicella and whooping cough.

The Department is funding the following research projects which relate to improving the uptake of immunisation:

1. Dr. C. L. Miller, Public Health Laboratory Service Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, London. PHLS Rubella monitoring and research programme.
2. Professor R. M. Anderson, Imperial College of Science and Technology, London. Quantitative investigations into the design of vaccination programmes for the control of childhood viral and bacterial diseases.
3. Professor E. G. Knox, Health Services Research Centre, Birmingham University. Simulation systems of rubella vaccination and pertussis vaccination programmes.
4. Professor W. W. Holland, Dr. A. Lakhani, Social Medicine and Health Services Research Unit, United Medical Schools of Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospitals. An investigation of the low uptake of measles immunisation in the Maidstone Health Authority.
5. Professor E. Alberman, London Hospital Medical College Effectiveness, efficiency, acceptability and cost in the preventive child health services.

Handicapped Children

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the estimated lifetime cost of caring for a child severely handicapped as a result of rubella; and if he will give the estimated lifetime cost of caring for all children handicapped as a result of rubella in the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will give the estimated lifetime cost of caring for a child severely disabled as a result of measles; and if he will give the estimated lifetime cost of caring for all children handicapped as a result of measles in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the information on which a reliable estimate could be based is not available.

"Care in Action"

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will produce an amended edition of "Care in Action"; and if he will make this publication available free on application to members of the medical profession.

Mr. Whitney: We have no plans to do so. "Care in Action" represents the Government's most comprehensive statement of policy priorities in the field of health and personal social services. Whilst a limited number of other priority areas have been identified subsequently, the priorities set out in "Care in Action" remain current.

Measles

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give figures for the measles immunisation rates and for the incidence of measles in the United Kingdom; and what information he has about the comparable proportional figures for the United States of America and for Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Whitney: The available information is as follows:

	Percentage immunisation uptake	*Reported cases*‖
1983		
England and Wales	*59	103,700
Czechoslovakia	†99	31
United States of America	‡96	‡1,497
1984		
England and Wales	*63	62,079
Czechoslovakia	n/a	n/a
United States of America	n/a	n/a

* Percentage of children immunised by the end of the second year following birth.
† Percentage of children immunised under five.
‡ Figures for 1982.
‖ England and Wales—notified cases of measles.
United States of America and Czechoslovakia—reported cases of measles—*Source:* World Health Organisation.

Radiation (Monitoring and Advice)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what follow-up monitoring and advice is being offered to the 70 British students who returned from Kiev and to other members of the public returning from eastern Europe.

Mr. Whitney: These students were carefully monitored on arrival. We are advised that the levels of radioactivity detected were such that there is no good medical reason for further monitoring. Although there is no need for further action, any student at all worried following return to this country and after arrival monitoring can consult their general practitioner.

Arrangements were made for people returning subsequently to be monitored at specific hospitals. It is not expected that they will need further monitoring, but should it be necessary the hospitals will be able to provide this.

War Widows

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have received concerning the position of pre-1973 war widows in relation to their pension entitlement.

Mr. Major: Representations are periodically received by this department and by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, suggesting that pre-1973 war widows should be entitled to the Ministry of Defence pension currently paid only to widows of service men who served on or after 31 March 1973 and whose death was attibutable to service.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the total cost of making available the Ministry of Defence pension to all war widows in addition to the Department of Health and Social Security pension.

Mr. Major: I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence that the estimated cost at current rates is in the region of £200 million a year.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the total number of women who became war widows before 1973 in *(a)* the first world war, *(b)* the second world war, *(c)* the Korean war and *(d)* other conflicts.

Mr. Major: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Of the 65,000 war widows' pensions in payment in December 1985, 8,000 were for service up to 30 September 1921 and 57,000 for service since 3 September 1939.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the numbers of war widows who are in receipt only of the Department of Health and Social Security pension.

Mr. Major: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to institute a pro rata non-dependants deduction for housing benefit for part-time workers.

Mr. Major: The future arrangements for non-dependant contributions under the reformed housing benefit scheme are still under consideration.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now publish in the *Official Report* the results of his Department's analysis of the statistical returns from local offices on supplementary benefit ordinary board and lodging claimants between April and July 1985.

Mr. Newton: I intend to make the findings available shortly.

Maternity Services

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* (i) the total number of maternity units in England and Wales and (ii) the number of maternity units which include a special care baby unit.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply,* 27 February 1986 c.*684*]: Of the 369 National Health Service hospitals in England with maternity departments there were 227 with a special care baby unit in 1984, the latest year for which figures are available centrally. Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Dentistry

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the proportion of people with no remaining natural teeth in each year since 1974.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply,* 6 May 1986, c.*87*]: These figures are not collected annually. Surveys in 1978 and in 1983 indicate that the proportion of adults in England and Wales with no remaining natural teeth was as follows:

	per cent.
1978	29
1983	25

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list those areas covered by the pilot scheme of capitation fees for dentists for child patients;

(2) if he will list those areas to be covered by the extended experiment in paying capitation fees for dentists for child patients.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply,* 6 May 1986, c. *87*]: The pilot study was limited to a small number of dentists in each of the following areas:

Gloucestershire
Manchester
Redbridge and Waltham Forest
South Glamorgan
Greater Glasgow.

The areas which it is proposed should be covered by the extended experiment are:

Bromley or Kingston and Richmond
Doncaster or Salford
Hereford and Worcester or Norfolk
Fife or Grampian.

Doctors

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many doctors are practising who began their medical training in 1979 or afterwards.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. 88]: I regret that information in the form requested is not available.

The latest available figures for doctors working in National Health Service hospitals in England are for 30 September 1985. They show 3,524 senior house officers in post who had been in the grade for less than one year, and 2,838 pre-registration house officers in post. Although these figures include overseas graduates, they correspond to the normal 1985 career stage of entrants to medical schools in 1979 and 1980 respectively. Entrants to medical schools after 1980 have not yet graduated.

No information related to these particular years of medical school entry is readily available about doctors working outside the hospital sector or outside the National Health Service.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 15 May 1986

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Sugar Corporation

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement concerning any communication he has received from the Director General of Fair Trading concerning the future ownership or control of the British Sugar Corporation.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend will make a statement as soon as is practicable.

Small Businesses

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is considering introducing a review procedure for small businesses in place of the current audit system following the proposals of the White Paper, "Lifting the Burden", Cmnd. 9571, in July 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: This was one of the possible options referred to in the consultative document "Accounting and Audit Requirements For Small Firms", which my Department published last June. However, it attracted little support from consultees and has therefore not been pursued. An announcement about the outcome of the consultation as a whole will be made shortly.

Surface Mount Club

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, following his announcement in February of the formation of the Surface Mount Club relating to electronic design and manufacture, he will make public the telephone number of Mr. Trevor Gilpin of his Department, the organiser of the club; and if he will take steps to allow those interested in this technology to contact Mr. Gilpin without obtaining prior approval.

Mr. Butcher: Mr. Trevor Gilpin, secretary of the DTI Surface Mount Club, can be contacted on 01-213-5310. No prior approval is necessary to make contact.

Airbus Industrie

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been achieved in the discussions between the Governments of the United Kingdom, France, West Germany and the United States of America on the methods of finance of Airbus Industrie; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: Some progress has been made towards achieving a better understanding of mutual concerns on a number of issues relating to trade in civil aircraft, including Government supports for the aircraft industry. Further discussions are expected to take place in June.

Post Office Act

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to consider reform of the Post Office Act to enable the Post Office to compete better and broaden its services to the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: My right hon. Friend has discussed with the Post Office its plans to secure the future of the counters business. The Government recognise the case for improving the competitiveness of the Post Office by enabling it to provide a broader range of services. My right hon. Friend has therefore told the Post Office that he will seek an early opportunity to introduce legislation to extend its powers.

Krugerrands

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many Krugerrands were imported into the United Kingdom in each month in 1985 and 1986 to date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is not available, as Krugerrands are not separately identified from other gold coins.

General Motors

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions took place at the meeting between the Minister for Trade and Mr. Robert Stempel of General Motors on 4 May in New York; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I met Mr. Stempel of General Motors during my recent visit to the United States of America. The meeting had been arranged many weeks earlier as one of several with United States companies. The visit was a useful opportunity to maintain normal good contacts between the Department and American companies which have significant investment in the United Kingdom.

Import Substitution (Awards)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will give consideration to establishing an award scheme, similar to existing awards for exports, for companies which record outstanding achievements in the field of import substitution.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Travel-to-Work Areas

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what magnitude of error in the employment census returns for a travel-to-work area would be regarded by his Department as sufficient to determine that that area should be included in the assisted area map, despite an original decision, based on the faulty returns, not to do so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

China

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the take-up of cheap credit facilities for trade with China and give details of its allocation to date.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 May 1986, c. *408*]: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Mr. Zheng Tuobin, the Chinese Minister for Foreign Economic Relations and Trade, have today signed a formal agreement covering our support under the aid and trade provision for £300 million business in China on favourable loan terms. Four projects have already been agreed as suitable for further consideration under this arrangement and commercial negotiations are continuing between the relevant United Kingdom companies and Chinese organisations. If agreed, these projects will take up a large part of the facility. The Government hope that use of this facility will be accompanied by a more general expansion in our economic and commercial relations with China.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Food Imports

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ensure that whatever agreement is made by the European Economic Community on the temporary banning of agricultural produce and other food from eastern Europe, there will not be any political discrimination, particularly against Yugoslavia.

Mrs. Chalker: The food import ban agreed by the Community on 12 May has been applied to all those countries falling substantially within a radius of 1,000 km from Chernobyl, including Yugoslavia. The ban is a short-term precautionary measure which will be reviewed on 20 May on the basis of the latest scientific evidence which the relevant countries are being urged to provide as rapidly as possible. We have already asked that the next review should pay particular attention to the position of Yugoslavia.

Krugerrands

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to make effective the ban on the import of Krugerrands; what is the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We expect to make an announcement shortly.

ENERGY

Oil Industry (Investment)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent evidence he has of oil companies postponing or cancelling planned investments in the North sea; and what specific evidence he has about the implications of the fall in oil prices for the rate of incremental investment.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Oil companies, as a matter of course, regularly review their North sea investment plans. Recently some drilling programmes have also been reviewed: the implications of any consideration by the operators of modifying their investment plans are not yet clear.

Electricity and Coal Industries

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the estimated outturn external financing requirements of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales and of the National Coal Board for 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Walker: The outturn external financing requirement for the electricity supply industry in England and Wales in 1985-86 is provisionally estimated at minus £457 million. The improvement over the estimated outturn of minus £400 million given in the 1986 public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702.II) mainly reflects higher sales of electricity during the cold winter. The main reason for the lower level of repayment compared with the external financing limit of minus £1,128 million was the cost of rebuilding coal stocks and higher interest charges resulting from the costs incurred during the miners' strike. These were not allowed for when the EFL was set before the start of 1985-86. There is therefore no question of any consequential reduction in the 1986-87 external financing limit.

The outturn external financing requirement of the National Coal Board for 1985-86 has provisionally been estimated at £435 million. This welcome improvement over the EFL of £929 million and the estimated outturn for the year of £740 million given in the 1986 public expenditure White Paper, reflects the sale of coal stocks to the electricity supply industry and faster than anticipated progress made by the board in recovering after the strike.

The net change in public expenditure comparing estimated outturn with EFL plans for these two industries taken together is £177 million. This was charged to the reserve and was therefore within the public expenditure planning total.

EMPLOYMENT

Loan Guarantee Scheme

48. **Mr. Alton** asked the Paymaster General whether he expects the recent changes to the loan guarantee system to produce more demand for loans over £15,000 from small unincorporated traders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The premium paid by borrowers has been reduced from 5 per cent. to 2·5 per cent. per annum. I expect this to lead to an increased demand for loans of all sizes up to the maximum of £75,000 from both incorporated and unincorporated traders.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Paymaster General, further to his answer on 6 May, *Official Report*, column *34*, regarding the errors made by Central Regional council in submitting its returns for the 1981 census of employment, if he will list the effects on all the relevant travel-to-work areas of the published unemployment figures.

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Norfolk North on 28 April, *Official Report*, column *343*, why there is no information available about the number of severely disabled claimants included in the unemployment figures for the years 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available because it is not needed for the purpose of administering benefits at unemployment benefit offices and is therefore not included in the systematic records on which the statistics are based.

Microwave Radiation

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Paymaster General when he expects the new guidelines on standards of protection for the public against microwave radiation to be published by the National Radiological Protection Board.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 May 1986, c. *442*]: I understand that the National Radiological Protection Board hopes to publish within the next few weeks a consultative document on guidelines for protection against the possible hazards of electromagnetic fields with frequencies below 300 GHz, which include microwave frequencies.

SCOTLAND

Torness Power Station

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of the Torness power station, and on the likely timetable for loading fuel into the reactor.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board (SSEB) that work on completing Torness advanced gas-cooled reactor nuclear power station is proceeding to programme with the intention of providing power output to the Scottish grid early next year. A small quantity of nuclear fuel has, with the approval of Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII), been loaded into reactor 1 for testing purposes as part of the commissioning procedure. A further approval will be required from NII to allow the board to load the balance of the fuel into that reactor and the inspectorate is being provided by the board with all the information it requires.

Environmental Health Officers

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many environmental health officers are employed by each islands and district authority in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not held centrally. The designation of "environmental health officers" is imprecise and can be applied to officers with a variety of different duties.

Radioactivity

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) for each islands and district authority in Scotland, what is the number of environmental health officers who have received special training in monitoring radioactivity in milk and rainwater;

(2) if he will list the local authorities in Scotland which held proper equipment for monitoring radioactivity in milk on 25 April.

Mr. John MacKay: Information about the special training of environmental health officers in this field is not held centrally. To my knowledge, no equipment for monitoring radioactivity in milk or rainwater is held by local authorities. The function of environmental health officers is to obtain samples where there is cause for concern about risks to public health, and to refer the samples to the appropriate laboratory for analysis. Monitoring is undertaken in Scotland principally by the National Radiological Protection Board's office in Glasgow, and this includes the analysis of samples. A number of nuclear establishments in Scotland, including those at Chapel cross, Hunterston and Dounreay, undertake regular local monitoring of radioactivity in milk and rainwater, and have undertaken additional analyses in the last two weeks, some on behalf of departments of environmental health.

Pipeline Assembly Yard, Tain

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his estimate of the length of time likely to elapse between his Department first receiving formal notice of the application for a proposed pipeline assembly yard at Tain, Ross-shire, by Land and Marine Engineering Ltd and his having finally evaluated the application;

(2) if he will estimate the length of time he now expects will be necessary for the further evaluation of the planning application by Land and Marine Engineering Limited for a development of a pipeline assembly yard at Tain, Ross-shire.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend received notification of the planning application on 7 April and called it in on 7 May. The time taken to reach a final decision will depend on a number of factors, not all of which are within the Government's control, but I hope that a decision will be issued before the end of the year.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail in the *Official Report* the total area within the relevant site of special scientific interest which the proposed pipeline assembly yard at Tain, Ross-shire would affect; and if he will express that area as a percentage figure of the total extent of the land mass constituting the relevant site of special scientific interest.

Mr. Ancram: Approximately 7 ha, 0·24 per cent. of the total area of the Morrich More site of special scientific interest (SSSI), would be directly affected by construction works associated with the proposal. It has been put to my right hon. and learned Friend, however, that a substantially greater part of the SSSI would be affected indirectly.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* each of the respective objectors to the planning application by Land and Marine Engineering Ltd. for development of a pipeline assembly yard at Tain, Ross-shire.

Mr. Ancram: When Highland regional council notified the planning application to my right hon. and learned Friend, it enclosed copies of letters objecting to, or expressing concern about, the proposed development from the following organisations and individuals:

The Nature Conservancy Council
The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
The Scottish Wildlife Trust
The Highlands and Islands Fishermen's Association (S.G.)
The Kyle of Sutherland District Fishery Board
The Mammal Society, London
The Countryside Commission for Scotland
Kestrel Subsea Systems Ltd., Wick
Fearn, Seaboard, Tarbat and Nigg Community Council
Mrs. B. A. Schofield, Tain
Mrs. J. M. S. Durham, Kildary
Mrs. M. R. I. Mackenzie, Tain
Mr. B. E. R. Brice, Inver, by Tain
Mr. A. Martin, Tain
Mr. J. J. P. Clokie, Tain
Mr. I. J. Munro, Tain
Mr. E. W. Granville, Hilton, Ross-shire
Mr. M. Connolly, Inver, by Tain
Mr. S. A. Wright, Fearn, by Tain
Mr. A. E. Sutherland, Fearn, by Tain
Mr. D. W. McAllister, Tain
Mrs. M. McLaren, Tain

Salmon Fishing (Nets)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why his Department decided to impose a ban on the use of nylon monofilament nets in fishing for salmon in Scottish waters; what is his preliminary assessment of the effect of the ban; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Since 1962 there has been a ban on the use of drift nets set from a boat to catch salmon in Scottish waters. That ban was extended to cover the use of gill nets, however set, with effect from 31 March 1986; at the same time an order was made prohibiting the carriage of monofilament gill nets for any purpose in any British fishing boat in Scottish inshore waters. These measures were designed to conserve salmon stocks and to aid the law enforcement agencies in dealing with illegal salmon fishing.

It is too soon to assess the effect of the recent orders.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Metropolitan Police Stations (24-hour Solicitor Scheme)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Attorney-General which police stations in the Metropolitan police area are not currently operating the 24-hour solicitor scheme.

The Attorney-General: The Law Society expects the number of local 24-hour duty solicitor schemes in the Metropolitan police area to increase considerably over the next months, reflecting increased participation by solicitors. 57 police stations in the Metropolitan police area are currently covered by the scheme. However, it has not yet been possible to implement a scheme covering the following 134 police stations:

Acton
Albany Street
Arbour Square
Banstead
Barking
Barkingside
Barnes
Beckenham
Bethnal Green
Biggin Hill
Bow Street
Brentford
Brick Lane
Brockley
Bromley
Bushey
Caledonian Road
Camberwell
Cannon Row
Cavendish Road
Chadwell Heath
Chelsea
Cheshunt
Chigwell
Chingford
Chislehurst
Chiswick
City Road
Cobham
Collier Row
Dagenham
Dalston
East Ham
East Molesey
Edgware
Eltham
Epsom
Erith
Farnborough
Feltham
Finchley
Forest Gate
Fulham
Gerald Road
Greenford
Hackney
Ham
Hammersmith
Hampstead
Hampton
Harlesden
Harrow
Harrow Road
Hendon
Highbury Vale
Highgate
Holborn
Holloway
Hornsey
Hounslow
Hyde Park
Ilford
Isle of Dogs
Islington
Kennington
Kensington
Kentish Town
Kilburn
Kingsbury
King's Cross Road
Lee Road
Leyton
Leytonstone
Loughton
Marylebone
Mill Hill
Muswell Hill
New Malden
Northwood
North Woolwich
Norwood Green
Notting Hill
Orpington
Paddington Green
Penge
Pinner
Plaistow
Plumstead
Ponders End
Poplar
Potters Bar
Putney
Radlett
Rochester Row
Roehampton
St Ann's Road
St John's Wood
St Mary Cray
Shenley
Shepherds Bush
Shepperton
Shooters Hill
Sidcup
Southgate
Staines
Stoke Newington
Stoneleigh
Sunbury
Sydenham
Teddington
Thamesmead
Thamesmead, Titmuss Avenue
Tottenham Court Road
Tower Bridge
Vine Street
Waltham Abbey
Walthamstow
Wanstead
Wapping
Waterloo Pier
Wealdstone
Welling
Wembley
Westcombe Park
West Drayton
West End Central
West Ham
West Hampstead
West Wickham
Whetstone
Willesden Green
Winchmore Hill
Woodford
Worcester Park

TRANSPORT

M4 Motorway

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he has any plans to increase the capacity of the M4 between the M25 and central London;

(2) what information he has on traffic congestion on the M4 between the M25 and central London in the period after the opening of the M4/M25 interchange; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The M4 has recently been widened between M25 and the airport spur. We have appointed consultants to examine a wide range of options for improving surface access between Heathrow and Central London, including the possibility of increasing the capacity of the M4/A4 corridor. Traffic monitoring will form part of the study which is expected to be finished next January.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest available figures for the overall cost of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre; and how that cost is divided between collection of road tax and other activities.

Mr. Michael Spicer: £114·7 million in 1985-86 for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Directorate, including the centre at Swansea and its local office network. The cost of excise duty collection and vehicle registration in the United Kingdom accounting for £93 million; the other main activity of driver licensing £21·7 million.

Water Supplies (Devon)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport, in view of the possible contamination of water supplies in Devon by arsenic arising from the construction of the Okehampton bypass along the southern route, he will make the results of the supplementary soil tests currently being undertaken by Wimpey Laboratories available to the South-West water authority.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Member will be aware from previous answers on this matter that the soil tests currently being undertaken arise not from any concern of contamination. They are to assist the design and construction of the road. The South West water authority is responsible for the water supplies in Devon. If it would be of assistance to it in safeguarding the water supply, we would of course make available to it such information as it may require from any of our investigations.

Driving Tests (Highland Region)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average waiting time for driving tests in the Highland region of Scotland; if he will list the comparable figures for each of the last seven years; and what proposals he has to increase the number of examiners in the region.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Highland region of Scotland is served by two permanent test centres at Inverness and Wick. The wating times at these in April this year and the preceding six years (those for 1979 and earlier are no longer avaialble) were as follows:

	Inverness (weeks)	*Wick (weeks)*
1980	25	20
1981	22	18
1982	11	6
1983	5	5
1984	5	4
1985	13	8
1986	17	19

There are no plans to increase the number of examiners in the Highland region, but we are trying to recruit 11 more examiners for Scotland as a whole. The traffic area aims to keep waiting times at all centres throughout Scotland as even as possible. The Highland region ought therefore to benefit from the general improvement this further recruitment will produce.

A1-M1 (Diversions)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that, when traffic is diverted or advised to divert from the A1, the road to which that traffic is diverted is not itself blocked or subject to delay, as a result of roadworks.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: When planning diversions in advance, we aim to avoid roads that would be unsuitable because of delays form roadworks. In emergencies traffic is diverted on to the most suitable road or roads available.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretry of State for Transport if he will ensure that when traffic on the M1 motorway is subject to serious delay as a result of roadworks, that on the A1 is enabled to move satisfactorily.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In planning major roadworks we seek to avoid combinations of works close together that would cause serious cumulative delays for traffic. It would be impractical to keep the A1 entirely clear of works, as we have a substantial programme of renewals. Two schemes are under way now and two others will follow later in the year.

Rothersthorpe Service Area, M1

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the Rothersthorpe service area on the M1 was last closed; and for how long.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Rothersthorpe service area was last closed to motorway traffic for a period of about four and a half weeks in autumn 1983.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what compensation was paid to the operators of the Rothersthorpe service area the last time it was closed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. Such compensation is exluded by the terms of the lease.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what work on the north and south carriageways of the M1 led to the last closure of the Rothersthorpe service area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The maintenance work causing the closure of the Rothersthorpe service area in 1983 was the reconstruction of the M1 northbound carriageway between junctions 15 and 16, with contra-flow traffic operation on the southbound carriageway.

Trunk Roads (Accident Reduction Schemes)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to the answer given in the *Official Report* of 2 May on a specific allocation of resources for small schemes for accident reduction on trunk roads, he will make a statement as to when and why practice in allocating funds for expenditure on small cost-effective engineering schemes on trunk roads changed from that outlined in the answer given to the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) on 25 July 1984, *Official Report*, column *689*.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The allocation referred to was made in 1984-85 only. Its purpose was to ensure that a minimum of £4·5 million from the regional programme was spent on safety-orientated schemes. The experiment

was discontinued because experience showed that in practice the safety schemes bought forward by agent authorities accounted for a much larger share of regional programme funds than that represented by the specific allocations. Such schemes continue to attract a substantial share of the programme.

DVLC Computer

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied that members of the public are prevented from gaining electronic entry into the computer system at the driver and vehicle licensing centre, Swansea.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Yes. The security measures in place on the driver and vehicle licensing centre's computers are in keeping with the sensitivity of the data held.

Pedestrian Crossings

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the criteria for providing pedestrian crossings on main roads; and if he will make a statement on the application of this policy in the particular case of the crossing being sought in Leinster avenue, Knowle West, Bristol.

Mr. Ridley: General guidance is given in departmental advice note TA-10-80, "Design Considerations for Pelican and Zebra Crossings", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. It is, however, a matter for local highway authorities to decide whether or not to install a pedestrian crossing at a particular site on a road for which they are responsible taking into account local circumstances. It would therefore not be appropriate for me to comment on the particular crossing mentioned.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will detail the immediate past employment or the current employment, other than as members of the board, of members of the London Regional Transport board.

Mr. David Mitchell: This information is contained in the following Department of Transport press notices, copies of which are available in the Library of the House:

Press Notice No.	*Date of Issue*
300	29 June 1984
468	18 October 1984
65	14 February 1985
159	25 March 1986

Severn Tunnel

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to celebrate the centenary of the opening of the Severn tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter for British Rail. I understand that it has yet to decide what celebrations, if any, will be held.

London Taxi Fares

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on London taxi fares.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend has made an order increasing London taxi fares by about 5·3 per cent. on average with effect from Sunday 15 June 1986. The new tariff will incorporate a minimum fare of 80p (including an unchanged hire charge of 40p) for the first 990 yards or 3 minutes 30 seconds. The rate will then be 20p for every 495 yards, or 1 minute 45 seconds up to 6 miles, and 20p for each 330 yards or 70 seconds thereafter.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Leavers

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the percentage of school leavers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, separately, obtaining one or more A-levels, five or more higher grade O-levels or CSE grade 1 passes, one or more higher grade O-level or CSE grade 1 passes, and no graded O-level or CSE results, in each year from 1965 to 1985.

Mr. Chris Patten: Information for Wales and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Northern Ireland. The information requested for England is shown in the following table:

School Leavers, England

Academic year	*Percentage of leavers with*			
	One or more A level pass	**Five or more higher grade passes at O level or CSE*	**One or more higher grade passes at O level or CSE*	*No graded results at O level or CSE*
1964-65	12·9	20·3	36·0	64·0
1965-66	13·7	21·1	37·8	62·2
1966-67	14·8	22·0	39·7	60·3
1967-68	15·2	22·5	40·5	49·7
1968-69	15·5	22·7	42·0	47·0
1969-70	15·9	23·1	43·3	44·5
1970-71	16·7	23·5	43·4	44·1
1971-72	16·2	23·5	43·8	43·0
1972-73†	—	—	—	—
1973-74	15·5	23·0	48·6	20·5
1974-75	15·4	22·6	49·2	18·6
1975-76	15·9	22·9	49·9	16·5
1976-77	15·6	23·5	51·4	14·8

Academic year	Percentage of leavers with: One or more A level pass	*Five or more higher grade passes at O level or CSE	*One or more higher grade passes at O level or CSE	No graded results at O level or CSE
1977-78	15·5	23·7	51·3	14·2
1978-79	15·4	23·7	52·0	12·8
1979-80	15·6	24·0	52·0	12·2
1980-81	16·5	25·1	52·6	11·4
1981-82	17·0	26·1	53·8	10·6
1982-83	17·1	26·2	54·6	9·6
1983-84	17·2	26·7	54·6	9·5
1984-85	17·1	26·9	54·7	9·4

Notes:

* From 1974-75 O-level grades A-C, CSE grade 1. Prior to 1974-75 O-level examinations were graded pass or fail.

† The raising of the school leaving age in 1973 affected the total number of school leavers, which was unusually low in 1972-73. Percentages are therefore unrepresentative and have been omitted.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, for each year since 1978-79, together with whatever projections are available for future years, what is spent in cash and real terms in England *(a)* in total and per child on primary, secondary and all schools, *(b)* in total and per full-time student on non-advanced further education and *(c)* the effect on these figures of including expenditure on other educational initiatives such as the micro-electronic programme and the technical and vocational education initiative.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information that is given in the following table has been drawn from the annual White Paper on public expenditure (Cmnd. 9143, 9428 and 9702). The figures exclude expenditure on the micro-electronics in education programme which ran from 1980-81 to 1985-86 and the technical and vocational education initiative which began in 1983-84. It is estimated that the addition of the expenditure under these programmes would raise the average unit cost for all schools by at most £10 per pupil per annum.

		Relevant current expenditure: Cash terms £ million	Relevant current expenditure: Real terms* £ million	Unit cost: Cash terms £	Unit cost: Real terms* £	Relevant current expenditure: Cash terms £ million	Relevant current expenditure: Real terms* £ million	Unit cost: Cash terms £	Unit cost: Real terms* £
		Primary schools				*All schools†*			
1978-79	Outturn	1,506	2,836	360	680	3,923	7,389	460	870
1979-80	Outturn	1,706	2,749	425	680	4,486	7,229	535	865
1980-81	Outturn	2,086	2,830	540	735	5,569	7,557	680	925
1981-82	Outturn	2,258	2,786	615	755	6,150	7,587	775	955
1982-83	Outturn	2,349	2,708	670	775	6,549	7,551	850	980
1983-84	Outturn	2,416	2,667	720	795	6,859	7,571	910	1,005
1984-85	Outturn	2,531	2,683	770	815	7,185	7,616	975	1,035
1985-86	Estimated outturn	2,664	2,664	810	810	7,495	7,495	1,040	1,040
1986-87	Plans	2,748	2,649	830	800	7,607	7,332	1,070	1,035
		Secondary schools				*Non-advanced further education‡*			
1978-79	Outturn	2,057	3,874	530	1,000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1979-80	Outturn	2,354	3,793	610	980	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1980-81	Outturn	2,952	4,006	765	1,040	688	934	n.a.	n.a.
1981-82	Outturn	3,304	4,076	865	1,070	790	975	1,620	2,000
1982-83	Outturn	3,544	4,086	945	1,085	878	1,012	1,715	1,975
1983-84	Outturn	3,735	4,123	1,015	1,120	931	1,028	1,785	1,970
1984-85	Outturn	3,912	4,147	1,095	1,165	975	1,034	1,860	1,975
1985-86	Estimated outturn	4,048	4,048	1,180	1,180	1,027	1,027	1,960	1,960
1986-87	Plans	4,088	3,940	1,240	1,195	1,004	968	2,120	1,865

* The real terms are the cash terms for each year repriced to 1985-86 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

† All schools include under fives, all other primary, secondary and special schools.

‡ The figures from 1985-86 onwards have been adjusted to include the expenditure on work-related education that is being funded by the Manpower Services Commission.

Plant Breeding Institute

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to reply to the letter of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West dated 9 April referring to the privatisation of the Plant Breeding Institute.

Sir Keith Joseph: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 13 May.

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive the report of Lazard Brothers on the privatisation of the National Seed Development Organisation and part of the Plant Breeding Institute; if he will publish the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Agriculture Ministers and I expect to receive the report of Lazard Brothers and Company Ltd. on the proposed privatisation of the National Seed

Development Company and part of the Plant Breeding Institute shortly. The report will contain commercially confidential material and will not be published. My right hon. Friend will make a statement as soon as decisions have been taken.

University Grants Committee

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to obtain and place in the Library copies of the letters concerning grant entitlements from the University Grants Committee to the various universities and colleges as soon as they have been issued.

Mr. Walden: This is already my right hon. Friend's normal practice.

PRIME MINISTER

Political Adviser

Q37. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to appoint a further political adviser for press matters at 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister: There are no political advisers in the No. 10 press office.

Settle-Carlisle Railway Line

Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the co-ordination between the Department of Employment and the Department of Transport in connection with discussions over the future of the Settle-Carlisle railway line; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has a duty under the statutory procedures to take account of all relevant factors, including social and economic considerations, in reaching a decision on the British Railways Board's proposals for the Settle-Carlisle line. The Department of Employment, with its interest in tourism, as well as all other interested Government Departments, will be fully consulted before any decision is taken.

Data Protection Registration

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister if she will list any Government Departments that did not put in their registration forms for data protection registration on time.

The Prime Minister: Each Department is responsible for its own data protection registration arrangements. Information is not held centrally.

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to the reply of 6 May to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West, (Mr. Janner) *Official Report*, column 3, why Her Majesty's Government are unwilling to seek from the United Nations copies of all documents in their possession relating to Dr. Kurt Waldheim's wartime activities; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government have not hitherto requested access to United Nations files on Dr. Waldheim because there appeared to be no direct British interest in the allegations made against him. However, in view of recent new allegations about the disappearance of British subjects in the Balkans during the second world war, the Ministry of Defence is searching military records to see whether they contain any information relevant in this context.

New Zealand (Security Briefings)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister why Her Majesty's Government have excluded New Zealand from security briefings and information.

The Prime Minister: It is not our practice to comment on intelligence matters.

Syria

Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if she will seek to pay an official visit to Syria.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Protea Coins

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government intend to ban the import of South African protea coins.

The Prime Minister: We are considering whether the spirit of our undertaking at the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference in 1985 covers new coins as well as Krugerrands.

Israel (Visit)

Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if, on her forthcoming visit to Israel, she will ask her hosts to take her to Syrian territory presently occupied by Israelis.

The Prime Minister: No.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagments for Thursday 15 May.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagments for Thursday 15 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Foreign Visitors

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent immigration records accurately show the number of foreigners leaving the United Kingdom; how many foreigners have overstayed their visa; how many Libyans have overstayed their visa; if he is taking any steps to find out how many Libyans are in the United Kingdom illegally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Prison Population

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the prison population at the most recent date for which figures are available; and what was the figure in May 1979.

Mr. Mellor: On 9 May 1986 the total prison population in England and Wales was 46,348. On 30 April 1979, the nearest equivalent date for which figures are available, the total was 42,130.

Prison Officers

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Prison Officers Association on the standards of work of private contractors employed to repair or maintain prison officers' quarters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None. My right hon. Friend is not aware of any complaint by the POA on this matter.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present waiting list for prison officers working at Wandsworth prison to be allocated housing accommodation.

Mr. Mellor: Fifteen.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present number of empty prison officer quarters at Wandsworth prison; and for what period of time these quarters have been empty.

Mr. Mellor: Thirteen. On average, quarters are reoccupied within two months of vacation.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards assistance to a prison officer living in prison quarters when a member of his family becomes disabled and work is required within the quarters to help the disabled person; who pays for such work; what advice is given to the officer and his family; if contact is made with the local social services department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Assistance is available from the prison department and from local authorities, and staff in need of help are encouraged to seek guidance and apply for help.

Immigration

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the pesent number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women waiting for interview for entry into the United Kingdom in India and Pakistan; and what the numbers were on 1 January 1985.

Mr. Waddington: Information on husbands, wives and fiance(e)s is given in the following table: corresponding data separately identifying men and women are not available for other categories.

Persons awaiting a first interview for their application for entry clearance to the United Kingdom

Number

	Husbands, male fiances	*Wives, female fiancees**
India		
End December 1984	1,000	180
End December 1985	800	340
Pakistan		
End December 1984	1,300	1,000
End December 1985	1,700	1,400

* Before 26 August 1985 female fiancees were not required to have entry clearance in order to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the reason for the delays in the interviewing by the immigration service of passengers arriving from Pakistan at terminal 3, Heathrow airport, on Saturday 10 May; how many passengers were affected; what was the average delay, the shortest delay and the longest delay; from which other countries arriving passengers were subject to similar or comparable delays on that day at Heathrow; and what steps he intends to take to prevent a recurrence.

Mr. Waddington: The reason for a build-up of delay on the immigration arrivals control at Heathrow terminal 3 on 10 May was the large number of passengers arriving in the early morning period. The Pakistan International Airline flight which arrived at 1100 was the 24th international arrival at terminal 3 that morning. An additional cause of delay was a bomb alert which resulted in no passengers reaching the control between 0815 and 0900. Approximately 1,300 passengers who arrived between 0800 and 0915 were subject to delay because of this incident.

On 10 May nationals of the following countries were required to submit to further examination at terminal 3:

	Number
Ghana	25
Nigeria	24
India	18
Pakistan	12
Zimbabwe	1
Turkey	1
Tanzania	1
Seychelles	1
Kenya	1
Iraq	1
Ecuador	1

For the 12 Pakistani nationals, the shortest period of time involved, including the time spent in interviewing, was 1 hour 15 minutes; the longest, 11 hours 15 minutes; and the average 5 hours 20 minutes. The periods of time in respect of other nationals required to submit to further examination were similar.

On 10 May immigration service resources were sensibly deployed to handle scheduled aircraft arrivals and the expected mix of passengers. Staff will continue to make every effort to minimise the length of delays despite the increased pressures on the control.

Domestic Violence

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether Her Majesty's Government plan to collect national statistics on domestic violence;

(2) what was *(a)* the number of reported incidents of domestic violence and *(b)* the percentage of incidents which resulted in prosecutions for each year from 1976.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not collected. Statistics of offences of violence between spouses recorded by the police in 1979 and 1980 were published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1980" (Cmnd. 8376, table 2.5). The recording of these offences was then discontinued as it was incomplete, of doubtful reliability and did not justify the cost. We have no further plans to attempt to collect national statistics on domestic violence.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Government have any plans to introduce a system whereby injunctions awarded by courts for cases of domestic violence are centralised so as to be available to all police stations immediately.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We are considering with the Association of Chief Police Officers the recommendations of the Women's National Commission's report on violence against women, which concerns domestic violence. This includes the enforcement of injunctions. There is no formal means for informing the police of the existence of injunctions, and it is advisable for a person who has obtained one to bring it to the attention of the local police. This is a speedy way of making the police aware of injunctions applying in their area and, as most injunctions are likely to be of local effect, a central record is unlikely to prove helpful.

Violent Crime

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to improve the collection of statistics on victims of crime.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Torney) on 20 February 1986, at column 294.

Fraud Trials (Juries)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet come to a decision on the Roskill report's recommendations on the abolition of juries in complex fraud trials.

Mr. Mellor: The Government will reach decisions on these recommendations later this year in the light of the comments invited in the White Paper on plans for criminal justice legislation (Cmnd. 9658).

Police (Statistics)

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the percentage of policemen who are of *(a)* Afro-Caribbean and *(b)* Asian origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 28 February 1986, 779 police officers—0·64 per cent. of the total police strength in England and Wales — were members of the ethnic minorities. No central record of their racial origin is maintained.

Police and Prison Officers (Pay)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present basic salary of *(a)* a 21-year-old police officer, and *(b)* a 21-year-old prison officer, assuming each to have had the same length of service.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The minimum age for joining the prison service is 21 years. Following initial training, a 21-year-old prison officer will receive an annual salary of about £6,989 (of which £5,388 is basic pay). The annual basic salary of a 21-year-old police officer with less than one year's service is £7,212.

Prisons (Drugs)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the number of prisoners in Her Majesty's prisons who have been charged with possessing drugs in each of the last three years;

(2) what has been the number of people in each of the last three years who have been charged with possessing drugs while on a visit to Her Majesty's prisons.

Mr. Mellor: I regret that information is not available in the form requested.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch schemes in the north-west.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There are over 3,700 neighbourhood or home watch schemes in the Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside police force areas, the number having trebled over the past year.

Although many of these schemes have been in existence for too short a time for their contribution towards reducing crime to be properly measured, I understand from the police forces concerned that there are encouraging indications that such schemes can be effective in reducing crime and the fear of crime, in increasing public awareness of the part they can play in preventing crime, in raising the degree of collaboration between police and the community in fostering community attitudes which are hostile to crime and in providing a focus for action for those who wish to work against crime.

Terrorism

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all terrorist atrocities in the area of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis since 1980 where the alleged perpetrators, whether subsequently arrested and charged or not, are believed to have been Arabs, indicating also where the victims were other Arabs; and whether he will indicate which cases have resulted in convictions.

Mr. Hurd: Details of incidents which the Metropolitan police attribute to Arab terrorists are as follows:

Arab Terrorist Incidents 1980-1986—London

Date	*Location*	*Incident*	*Death/Injury*	*Victim*	*Case Result*
17 January 1980	Mount Royal Hotel, London W1	Bomb exploded	1 dead	Arab	—
11 April 1980	Mosque, Park Road, Regents Park, London	Shooting	1 dead	Arab	Arrests and conviction
12 April 1980	Queensway, Bayswater, London	Find of guns	—	—	Arrests and conviction
25 April 1980	Ennismore Gardens Mews, Kensington	Shooting	1 dead	Arab	Arrests and conviction
17 May 1980	Queens Garden Hotel, Bayswater, London W2	Bomb explosion	1 dead, 1 injured	Arabs	Arrest and conviction
1 June 1980	Kuwait Oil Company, 80 New Bond Street, W1	Bomb explosion	—	—	—
12 June 1980	Byford Street, London	Find of explosives	—	—	—
28 December 1980	Libyan Airline Office, 88 Piccadilly, W1	Bomb ignited but did not explode	—	—	—
13 December 1981	Connaught Square, London W2	Bomb exploded in car	2 dead 1 injured	Arabs	Arrests and conviction
3 June 1982	Park Lane, London W1	Shooting and subsequent find of bombs and weapons	2 injured	Isreali Ambassador and Arab	Arrests and conviction
31 August 1983	Leumi Bank, Woodstock Street W1	Bomb explosion	—	—	—
10 March 1984	123 Queensway, London W2	Bomb explosion	—	breakdown by nationality not available	Arrests and convictions
10 March 1984	104 Queensway, London W2	Bomb defused	—		
10 March 1984	14 Berkeley Street, London W1	Bomb explosion	23 injured		
10 March 1984	1 Palace Gate, London W8	Bomb defused	—		
11 March 1984	16 Palace Gate, London W8	Bomb defused	—		
17 April 1984	Libyan Embassy, London SW1	Shooting/siege	1 dead, 11 injured	11 Arabs	
20 April 1984	Terminal 2, Heathrow Airport	Bomb explosion	27 injured	breakdown by nationality not available	—
17 August 1984	Bickenhall Street, London W1	Shooting	1 dead	Arab	—
27 February 1985	Tara Hotel, London W2	Find of hand grenades	—	—	—
3 June 1985	Syrian Embassy, London SW1	Bomb defused	—	—	Arrests in Europe—awaiting trial
15 June 1985	33 Great Windmill Street, London W1	Bomb defused	—	—	Arrests in Europe—awaiting trial
23 September 1985	Vicinity of Regents Park	Hand grenades		—	Arrests—awaiting trial
17 April 1986	Heathrow Airport	Bomb defused	—	—	Arrests—awaiting trial

Independent Broadcasting Authority

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation separating the radio and television elements of the Independent Broadcasting Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so, but possible future arrangements for the provision and regulation of radio broadcasting will be considered in a Green Paper which the Government hope to publish later in the year, as explained in the reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) on 8 May, at column 206.

Local Radio

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has had recent discussions with the BBC regarding its proposals to establish local radio stations where there exists a station run by independent radio; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The third report of the Home Office local radio working party, published in 1980, set out proposals for the provision of new local radio services by the BBC and IBA. These proposals, which clearly envisaged competition for audiences between the BBC and IBA, were approved in principle by the then Home Secretary in 1981, and suitable frequency assignments were authorised. The timing of the introduction of services in approved areas then became a matter for the BBC and IBA in the light of the individual circumstances. We have had no recent discussions with the BBC on this matter.

Community Radio

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take into consideration, when granting franchises to community radio stations in Wales, the linguistic balance of the service being offered.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes.

News International, Wapping

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has as to the number of members of the public injured in Wapping on the night of 10 May and as to how many required hospital treatment;

(2) how many police officers were injured in Wapping on the night of 10 May; and how many required hospital treatment;

(3) how many police officers were on duty in Wapping on the night of 10 May; and how many were from Newham.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner that 1,165 officers were deployed on the evening of 10 May, of whom 27 were from Newham. The Commissioner informs me that 20 police officers were injured that night, of whom three required hospital treatment. According to his information, which may be incomplete, no member of the public received hospital treatment: information about other injuries is not available.

Metropolitan Police (Vehicles)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total vehicle fleet of the Metropolitan police; and how many of these vehicles are *(a)* British built and *(b)* of foreign origin.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that the total vehicle fleet of the Metropolitan police, including cars, vans, motorcycles and other vehicles, was 4,004 as at 31 March 1986. Of these, 53 motorcycles and 51 cars-vans were manufactured outside the European Community. The country of manufacture of vehicles made by international companies within the EC is not always known, but at least two thirds of the remaining vehicles were manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Fire Services (London)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Fire Services, during Her Majesty's Inspectorate's 1986 annual inspection of the London fire brigade in the current month, will be examining the operational implications for fire cover in east London of the loss of the hose-laying lorry appliance from F21 Stratford fire station on 1 April;

(2) if he will provide details as to the projected attendance time of a hose-laying lorry appliance mobilised by the London fire brigade to an incident in Newham, North-East constituency *(a)* prior to the loss of the hose-laying lorry appliance from F21 Stratford fire station and *(b)* after the implementation of that loss;

(3) if he will publish the evidence presented to him in connection with the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority's proposal to reduce establishment by the loss of the hose-laying lorry from F21 Stratford;

(4) if he or the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority consulted Essex county council over the proposed loss of the hose-laying lorry from F21 Stratford;

(5) if he will make it his policy not to accept any further proposals from the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority for reductions in establishment of the London fire brigade in 1987-88 and 1988-89;

(6) what allowance he made for potential traffic congestion in east London in accepting the proposal of the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority to reduce establishment by the loss of the hose-laying lorry at F21 Stratford.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The deployment of appliances to maintain appropriate standards of fire cover is in the first instance a matter for the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority. My right hon. Friend has approved and remains satisfied with the arrangements for 1986-87. Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate was involved in the recent review of all special appliances undertaken by the London Fire Brigade which resulted in the withdrawal of a hose laying lorry from F21 Stratford fire station, and it will not be specifically re-examining this point during the present inspection. The London Fire and Civil Defence Authority did not, and was not required to, consult neighbouring fire authorities about its proposals for the deployment of special appliances.

We will consider arrangements for 1987-88 and 1988-89 at the right times in the light of the authority's proposals.

Avon Multicultural Education Centre

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much in total was the funding to the Avon Multicultural Education Centre from his Department under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966; whether any guidance was given from his Department as to the conduct of the Avon Multicultural Education Centre; and whether such guidance will be affected by the review of the criteria for section 11 spending currently under way.

Mr. Waddington: For 1985-86 (the last financial year for which the relevant information is available), the Home Office has approved a claim of £703,215 for grant under section 11 in respect of staff at the Avon Multicultural Education Centre. The Avon county council has been reminded of the criteria under which section 11 grant is paid and asked to provide further information about the functions of certain posts.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been made to service the Lieutenancy following abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Mellor: Following abolition of the Greater London council, the servicing of the Lieutenancy has been assumed by the London Residuary Body, the chairman of which acts as clerk to the Lieutenancy.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has yet reached decisions on future arrangements for supplementary benefit mortgage interest payments.

Mr. Newton: As indicated in the Green and White Papers on social security reform (Cmnds 9517 and 9691) the Government have been considering in discussion with the building societies and other major lenders, what changes might be appropriate in the present arrangements for meeting mortgage interest payments with supplementary benefit.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, has today referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee for consultation draft regulations which incorporate the Government's proposals for change. The main proposal is to alter the balance of responsibility between taxpayers, borrower and lender. The amount of mortgage interest payable with supplementary benefit will be limited to 50 per cent. for the first six months on benefit for all claimants aged under 60.

Those remaining on benefit after this period would, as now, have their mortgage interest payments met in full. The Government propose to allow interest on arrears which have accumulated because of the six months limitation to qualify for benefit. This should assist lending organisations to reschedule loans in appropriate cases where interruption of earnings is longer term. A further change will enable homeowners who take out mortgage protection policies to benefit from them through a special supplementary benefit disregard of income from such policies.

The draft regulations also incorporate other minor proposals, including a beneficial amendment to ensure that a mortgage or loan taken out to replace an earlier advance will attract benefit on the same basis as the original loan. Subject to consultation and the passage of the necessary regulations, it is intended that the changes should take effect in the autumn. I am placing copies of the draft regulations and the Department's consultation paper to the Social Security Advisory Committee and also a copy of the Social Security Policy Inspectorate's Enquiry into Mortgage Interest in the Library today.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Wales are currently in receipt of supplementary benefit; and what was the figure in May 1979.

Mr. Major: The latest information available is as follows:

	Numbers
May 1979	175,000
February 1985	279,000

Source: Quarterly Statistical Enquiries

Housing Benefit

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to change the way that income from home income plans is taken into account in the housing benefit assessment.

Mr. Newton: We have received a number representations about the way that income generated by home income plans is treated in the housing benefit assessment. At present, following legal advice, our guidance manual states that the whole of such income should be taken into account, including that portion which is deducted at source as mortgage interest. We have decided that in future, in view of the special nature of these plans, the mortgage interest deduction should be disregarded in the assessment. This will require an amendment to the housing benefits regulations. We hope to introduce the change in the near future following consultation with the relevant organisations.

Hearing Aids

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what response he proposes to make to proposals by the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association to the effect that where there are long delays in waiting for an assessment by ear, nose and throat surgeons before hearing aids are prescribed such patients should be referred directly to audio-technicians and examined by consultants at a later stage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: As I announced on 7 April at the launch of the "Breaking the Sound Barrier" campaign being staged by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, Age Concern and the British Association of the Hard of Hearing, we are consulting all the professional and other bodies concerned about how direct reference of adult patients to hearing aid centres could be more widely used.

Unemployed Persons (Benefits)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total cost in *(a)* Wirral metropolitan borough council and *(b)* Liverpool city council of payments to the unemployed of each of the following benefits for each year since 1979: (i) unemployment benefit, (ii) supplementary allowances and (iii) housing benefit.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will present a table showing the numbers of unemployed people in *(a)* Wirral metropolitan borough council and *(b)* Liverpool city council by entitlement to benefit for each year since 1979 and distinguishing between the following: (i) unemployment benefit only, (ii) unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit, (iii) supplementary benefit only, (iv) no benefit, and (v) housing benefit.

Mr. Major: The following table shows the numbers of unemployed people in *(a)* Wirral metropolitan borough council and *(b)* Liverpool city council in November each year since 1979 receiving the following benefits: (i) unemployment benefit only (ii) unemployment benefit and supplementary benefits (iii) supplementary benefit only (iv) no benefit. Similar information is not available for housing benefit.

(a) Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

(thousands)

	UB	*UB+SA*	*SA*	*Nil*	*Total*
1979	4·8	0·9	6·9	2·2	14·8
1980	7·6	1·5	8·6	2·7	20·4
*1982	7·1	2·3	16·8	4·4	30·6
1983	6·4	2·0	18·5	3·2	30·1
*1985	6·0	1·9	18·4	3·8	30·1

(b) Liverpool City Council

(thousands)

	UB	*UB+SA*	*SA*	*Nil*	*Total*
1979	4·6	1·1	12·4	2·3	20·5
1980	6·6	1·6	14·3	1·8	24·2
*1982	5·0	2·1	20·4	2·8	30·4
1983	4·6	1·9	22·9	2·2	31·6
*1985	4·0	1·4	24·1	2·6	32·1

* Figures for 1981 and 1984 are not available because of industrial action.

Source: Quarterly Count of Unemployed Claimants

Retirement Pensioners (Overseas)

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list each country or dependency outside the United Kingdom where United Kingdom retirement pensioners are known to live and draw their pension, showing for each country how many pensioners there are, whether they get pension increases and, for those countries where they do not, what is the average pension paid.

Mr. Major: United Kingdom retirement pensions are paid to beneficiaries living in the following countries outside the United Kingdom. The number of beneficiaries in each country at 31 December 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) is shown in each case. The average pension paid in countries where no increases are payable is £13·32.

Country	*Number*
Albania	5
Algeria	1
Andorra	88
Angola	1
Anguilla	49
Antigua	119
Argentina	133
Australia	96,126
Austria	1,867
Bahamas	106
Bahrain	15
Bangladesh	1,253
Barbados	729
Belgium	2,449
Belize	10
Bermuda	241
Bolivia	4
Botswana	38
Brazil	133
Brunei	9
Bulgaria	9
Burma	7
Cameroon	4
Canada	54,388
Cayman Islands	22
Chile	38
China	7
Colombia	23
Cook Islands	5
Costa Rica	5
Cyprus	2,159
Czechoslovakia	25
Denmark	239
Djibouti	3
Dominica, Commonwealth of	233
Dominican Republic	132
East Germany	13
Ecuador	9
Egypt	34
El Salvador	1
Ethiopia	4
Falkland Islands and Dependencies	6
Faroe Islands	1
Fiji	27
Finland	35
France	4,520
Gabon	1
Gambia	5
Ghana	44
Gibraltar	277
Greece	639
Grenada	298
Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique and Reunion Island	6
Guatemala	3
Guernsey	4,489
Guyana	124
Haiti	1
Honduras	2
Hong Kong	331
Hungary	138
Iceland	17
India	2,580
Indonesia	13
Iraq	3
Irish Republic	38,744
Israel	1,891
Italy	6,974
Jamaica	9,327
Japan	42
Jersey	5,652
Jordan	7
Kenya	345
Kiribati (Gilbert Islands)	2
Kuwait	6
Lebanon	26
Lesotho	6

Country	Number
Liberia	4
Libyan Arab Republic	2
Luxembourg	49
Madagascar	2
Malawi	38
Malaya	45
Malta	1,480
Mauritius	87
Mexico	56
Monaco	160
Montserrat	180
Morocco	28
Mozambique	1
Nauru, Republic of	2
Nepal	14
Netherlands	1,598
Netherlands Antilles	6
New Zealand	23,167
Nigeria	69
Norfolk Island	11
Norway	119
Oman	8
Pakistan	3,369
Panama	7
Papua New Guinea	17
Peru	34
Philippines	34
Poland	2,459
Portugal (including Madeira)	1,131
Puerto Rico	3
Qatar	6
Rumania	19
Rwanda	2
St. Helena and Dependencies	30
St. Kitts-Nevis	277
St. Lucia	350
St. Vincent	237
Sarawak	2
Sark	64
Saudi Arabia	23
Senegal	8
Seychelles	24
Sierra Leone	33
Singapore	60
Solomon Islands	4
Somalia	134
South Africa	18,819
South Korea	2
South West Africa or Namibia	13
Spain (including Balearic and Canary Islands)	11,734
Sri Lanka	94
Sudan	9
Swaziland	42
Sweden	64
Switzerland	1,552
Syria	1
Taiwan	2
Tanzania	39
Thailand	31
Togo	1
Tonga	3
Trinidad and Tobago	251
Tunisia	8
Turkey	192
Turks and Caicos Islands	2
Uganda	12
United Arab Emirates	22
United States of America	32,077
USSR	741
Uruguay	16
Vanuatu (New Hebrides)	1
Venezuela	26
Virgin Islands	29
Western Samoa	7
West Germany	7,863
Yemen Arab Republic (North)	719
Yemen, People's Democratic Republic of (South)	87
Yugoslavia	964
Zaire	5
Zambia	86
Zimbabwe	3,498
Travelling	42
Address not known	828
Countries not recorded (people in transit)	5,733

The following numbers live in countries in which benefit is paid at current or partially unfrozen rates.

Country	Number
Austria	1,867
Belgium	2,449
Bermuda	241
Cyprus	2,159
Denmark	239
Finland	35
France	4,520
Germany, Federal Republic	7,863
Gibraltar	277
Greece	639
Guernsey	4,489
Iceland	17
Irish Republic	38,744
Israel	1,891
Italy	6,974
Jamaica	9,327
Jersey	5,652
Luxembourg	49
Malta	1,480
Mauritius	87
Netherlands	1,598
Portugal	1,131
Sark	64
Spain (including Balearic and Canary Islands)	11,734
Switzerland	1,552
Turkey	192
United States of America	32,077
Yugoslavia	964

Christmas Bonus

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those countries where the Christmas bonus is paid to people who are *(a)* there on holiday on the qualifying date or *(b)* ordinarily resident there on the qualifying date.

Mr. Major: The Christmas bonus is payable to people in receipt of a qualifying benefit who are present or ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom (which for this purpose includes Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and Gibraltar) or in any country of the European Community at any time during the qualifying week.

Pregnancies (Computers)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the use of computers in monitoring pregnancies within the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: We support the continuing development of the wide range of computer technology available to assist Health Service staff in monitoring pregnancies. The provision of the equipment is a matter for induvidual health authorities.

Phenol Poisoning

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the long-term effects on health of low-level phenol poisoning.

Mr. Whitney: No. We are advised that phenol in strong concentrations is known to be a caustic, but there is no evidence to suggest that low concentrations taken orally over long periods will adversely affect human health.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many married women in Wales would be entitled to receive invalid care allowance if eligibility was extended to them.

Mr. Newton: I regret that it is not possible to make an estimate.

Organ Donations

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if any studies have been undertaken by his Department to establish the practicability of requiring general practitioners to seek approval for the donations of organs to be obtained from relatives prior to the death of the donor.

Mr. Whitney: No. Donated organs normally come from patients in hospital intensive care units. Even if the general practitioner and the relatives knew each other, it is most unlikely that they will be in contact at the relevant time.

A law was enacted in the state of New York in March 1985 requiring hospital administrators to ensure that the relatives of all suitable organ donors are asked for their consent that the organs be removed. I will be visiting New York later this month to learn about the practical effects of the law's implementation.

Geriatric Beds, Leicestershire

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the rate of occupancy of geriatric beds in Leicestershire.

Mr. Whitney: During 1984, the latest year for which figures are available centrally, 811 beds in departments of geriatric medicine were occupied daily on average in National Health Service hospitals in Leicestershire district health authority, representing 92·5 per cent. of available beds.

Abortions

Mrs. Roe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the substance of the replies received to his letter of 11 December to proprietors of approved nursing homes and registered pregnancy advice bureaux concerning abortions; what specific reply was received from the Raleigh nursing home, Brixton hill and the Robert nursing home, Birmingham; and what action he proposes to take in the light of these responses.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of district health authorities which are conterminous with the local authority dealing with services for senior citizens, environmental health, mental illness and provisions for the disabled.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Wales are currently in receipt of invalidity benefit.

Mr. Major: One hundred and eight thousand as at 30 March 1985, the latest date for which information is available.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names and locations of the six residential care homes and two nursing homes which have had their registrations cancelled, and the reasons for cancellation in each case.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 1 May at column *468* in respect of residential care homes. Nursing homes are registered with district health authorities, and I suggest that the hon. Members asks the health authorities concerned for details of the cancellations. The registration authorities for the homes concerned were:

Bedfordshire county council
Cambridgeshire county council
Lancashire county council
Dudley metropolitan borough
South Tyneside metropolitan borough
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde health authority
Worcester and district health authority

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what surveillance is carried out by his Department to ensure that district health authorities and local authorities adhere to their statutory requirements under the Registered Homes Act 1984 and the Mental Nursing Homes Regulations 1984 in respect of the inspection of private nursing homes; and if he is satisfied with the current performance by health and local authorities of their duties in this regard.

Mr. Whitney: Nursing homes are registered and inspected by district health authorities who are accountable to regional health authorities. RHAs monitor all aspects of DHAs' performance. As regards residential care homes, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 28 January at column *487*.

NHS (General Services)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the manner of the answer to the hon. Member for Norfolk North, of 21 December 1984, *Official Report*, columns *412-14*, he will provide figures for expenditure by the family practitioner services, the Dental Estimates Board, the Prescription Pricing Authority and

other special health authorities providing National Health Service central services for 1983-84; and if he will also publish comparable figures, at current and at 1983-84 prices, and comparable percentages for 1960 and 1970, for the above categories and those in the original answer.

Mr. Hayhoe I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Fraud (Staff Deployment)

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 7 March to the hon. Member for Nuneaton, *Official Report*, column *322*, how he intends to deploy the additional 500 staff for fraud work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: These extra staff will strengthen my Department's anti-fraud effort in two important areas. At present we have a complement of nearly 2,500 staff for fraud work—2,300 in local offices and the remainder in regionally based teams. We shall continue to base most of our effort against fraud in local offices, 180 of the extra staff will be put into selected offices specifically to reinforce their efforts to combat benefit fraud by claimants resident in hotels and other board and lodging accommodation, to uncover collusion by landlords, and to bring prosecutions where evidence is available. The other 320 extra staff will be added to the regionally based teams: these teams will be re-grouped into 31 benefit fraud teams, one for each management group of offices. They will help the local office in fully investigating allegations of fraud and bringing prosecutions where justified.

Psychiatric Patients, Lincoln

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much additional funding has been allocated to North Lincolnshire district health authority to provide community care of psychiatric patients discharged from St. John's hospital.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *77*]: Health Authorities make arrangements for bridging finance and joint funding to be provided to establish community care services for long stay psychiatric patients moving out of hospital. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Trent regional health authority for the details he requires. Trent RHA has the responsibility for the allocation of funds to the North Lincolnshire health authority.

Hip Replacement Operations

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hip replacement operations have taken place in health authorities in the West Midlands region in each of the last seven years; and what was the range of length of hospital stay for such operations.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 March 1986, c. *318*]: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member all the information she seeks. Some of it could be provided only at disproportionate cost. In National Health Service hospitals in the West Midlands region it is estimated that in 1983, the latest year for which information is available centrally, an estimated 5 per cent. of in-patient cases undergoing hip replacement operations remained in hospital for five days or less, and 5 per cent. for six weeks or more. The available information on the number of such operations is given in the table.

National Health Service hospitals, West Midlands Regional Health Authority
Estimated number of hip replacement operations

Year	*Number*
1977	2,320
1978	2,490
1979	3,080
1980	3,530
1981	3,520
1982	3,610
1983	3,660

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what increase in prices is expected in each European Economic Community country under the package now being agreed for farm prices, taking into account changes in monetary compensatory allowances; what will be the increase in each case for each of the products now in surplus; and what effect the package is expected to have on European Economic Community output of each of the products in surplus in terms of tonnage produced.

Mr. Gummer: The expected changes in the common support prices for the major commodities are set out in table I. In Germany and the Netherlands the green rates have not been changed and the support prices in national currencies will be modified by amounts corresponding to table I. In other member states supprt prices in national currencies will be further adjusted to take account of the green rate changes which are expected to be as set out in table II. The overall effect of these changes on production levels will depend also on other measures being applied such as the reduction in milk quotas, the cereals co-responsibility levy and changes related to cereals quality, as well as other factors including the weather.

Table I

Commodity	*Support Price*	*Per cent. Change in Common Support Price*
Milk	Target price	0
SMP and Butter	Intervention price	0
Beef	Guide price	0
Wheat meeting new quality standards	Intervention price	0
Feed Wheat	Intervention price	Up to −7·0
Barley	Intervention price	−5·0
Maize	Threshold price	+0·5
	Intervention price	0
Rye (breadmaking)	Intervention price	−1·0
Rye (feed)	Intervention price	−5·9
Durum wheat	Intervention price	−4·0
Pigmeat	Basic price	0
Sheepmeat	Basic price	0
Rice	Intervention price	0
Sugar	Basic and intervention prices	0
Oilseed Rape	Target and intervention prices	*0
Wine	Guide prices	0
Olive Oil	Intervention price	−5·0

Commodity	Support Price	Per cent. Change in Common Support Price
Tobacco	Prices and premia	0 to −6·0 (depending on variety)
Fruit and Vegetables	Withdrawal prices	+1·0 to −7·5 (according to product)

* Target price subject to reduction of up to 5 per cent. if forecast EC 10 production exceeds maximum guaranteed quantity of 3·5 million tonnes for 1986-87; intervention price to be reduced by same amount.

Table II
Percentage increase in support price (national currency) as a result of green rate changes

Member state and commodity	Per cent.
United Kingdom	
Products of livestock origin	2·7
Products of crop origin	1·3
Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain	
Products of livestock origin	2·0
Products of crop origin	1·0
Denmark	
Products of livestock origin	2·0
Products of crop origin	1·5
France	
Products of livestock origin	2·9
Products of crop origin	1·4
Greece	
Products of livestock and crop origin	14·0
Ireland	
Products of livestock origin	3·0
Products of crop origin	1·5
Italy	
Cereals (except rice) and oilseeds	3·8
Other products	4·9
Portugal	
Products of livestock origin	1·9
Products of crop origin	1·0
Germany and Netherlands	
Products of livestock and crop origin	*

* No green rate change.

Milk Quotas

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intends to take to assist those dairy farmers affected by the decision to make a three per cent. cut in milk quotas over the next three years.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

CAP (Expenditure)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount of expenditure in the United Kingdom under the common agricultural policy per acre of cereals, rapeseed and sugarbeet, together with the amount spent per beef unit, per dairy cow, per pig, per sheep and per 1,000 chickens; and what is his estimate of the total amount of expenditure under the common agricultural policy per acre of agricultural land.

Mrs. Fenner: Expenditure in the United Kingdom in 1985 under the common agricultural policy (CAP), expressed per hectare of different crops, was set out in my reply of 30 April at columns *437-38*. The corresponding information on livestock products, where expenditure can be specifically allocated, is shown in the table. Total (provisional) expenditure in the United Kingdom under the CAP, expressed per hectare of total agricultural area, was some £112 per hectare in 1985-86.

Average expenditure in the United Kingdom—provisional 1985

	FEOGA funded	United Kingdom Exchequer funded*
	£	£
Beef‡ (per head of total beef cattle)‖	21	24
Milk and milk products (per dairy cow)	83	28
Pigmeat (per head of total pigs)	†	n/a
Sheepmeat‡ (per head of total sheep)	6	n/a
Poultrymeat and eggs (per 1,000 head of total poultry)	5	n/a

n/a expenditure not separately identified.
* United Kingdom expenditure less receipts from sales of intervention stocks.
† levies collected exceed payments by approximately 10 p per pig;
‡ excluding special payments made in Less Favoured Areas in the form of hill livestock compensatory allowances: in 1985-86 these totalled £62·5m on sheep (£1·75 per head of total sheep) and £47·9m on beef (£5·30 per head of total beef cattle);
‖ total cattle other than those used, or intended to be used, for milk production.

Cereal Substitutes

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current level of imports of cereal substitutes into the United Kingdom from third countries.

Mrs. Fenner: I understand that my hon. Friend is specifically interested in manioc. Recent levels of imports originating from third countries (excluding Spain and Portugal throughout) are shown below. January 1986 is the latest period for which information is currently available.

Imports of manioc from third countries

	Value (£'000)	Quantity ('000 tonnes)
1984	16,782	119·9
1985	11,692	79·2
1984*	4,622	5·2
1985*	2,170	10·1
1985†	844	5·5
1986†	1,452	9·7

* October to December.
† January.

Wheat

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the average ex-farm price of wheat in the United Kingdom for 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 at constant prices, showing the 1979 price as 100.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested is presented in the table:

	Ex-farm price of wheat		
	In current terms		*
	£/Tonne	Index 1979=100	Index 1979=100
1979	96	100	100
1980	99	104	98
1981	109	114	97
1982	114	119	94
1983	124	129	98
1984	112	116	88
1985	110	115	89

* Deflated by the index of Producer Prices of Agricultural Products.

Exports

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total value of exports of *(a)* cereals and *(b)* other agricultural products in each year since 1979 in actual and constant prices; and what is the percentage increase in each case in constant prices show.ng 1979 as 100.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested is presented in the following table:

	Exports of cereals and cereal preparations			Exports of food, feed and alcoholic beverages excluding cereals and cereal preparations		
	Value £'000	Value in real (1979) terms* £'000	Index of value in real terms* (1979 = 100)	Value £'000	Value in real (1979) terms* £'000	Index of value in real terms* (1979 = 100)
1979	264	264	100	2,433	2,433	100
1980	456	387	147	2,599	2,204	91
1981	698	529	200	2,693	2,040	84
1982	774	540	205	2,877	2,008	83
1983	741	494	187	3,197	2,130	88
1984	993	631	239	3,464	2,202	91
1985†	834	499	189	3,891	2,327	96

* After deflation by the General Index of Retail Prices.
† Provisional.

Milk

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much milk has been thrown away in Scotland and the north of England since the beginning of May.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 14 May 1986, c. *485*]: No milk has had to be disposed of in Scotland and the north of England since the beginning of May as a result of the incident at the Chernobyl reactor. Levels of iodine 131 in milk arising from the activity deposited during the weekend of 3 to 4 May, which have always been well below levels at which precautionary action would need to be considered, are falling. Levels of radiocaesium, which are also well below the action level, are beginning to show signs of decreasing.

Sherry

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to implement the provisions of the treaty of accession of Spain and Portugal concerning the import or sale of Australian sherry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 April 1986, c. *314*]: The product marketed before Spanish accession as "Australian sherry" may continue to be imported and sold in the United Kingdom under a different description. However, following the accession of Spain and Portugal, the European Commission takes the preliminary view that it is no longer permissible to market the product under this designation in virtue of Community Regulation 338/79. The relevant provisions of this regulation are implemented into United Kingdom law by regulation 5(1) of the Common Agricultural Policy (Wine) Regulations 1982.

Imports (Radiation)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment his Department has made, following the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in the Ukraine, of the long term effect on agricultural products produced in the Ukraine, Bielorussia, the Baltic States of Poland; if he envisages a long-term ban on importation of agricultural products from all those countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: It is not possible to make such an assessment on the information at present available. As a precautionary measure the importation of a range of agricultural products from the countries mentioned in the question has been banned by the European Community until 31 May before which date a scientific review will be undertaken.

WALES

YTS (Cardiff)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are currently on the YTS *(a)* in Cardiff and *(b)* in Cardiff West; what will be the effect of the introduction of the recently launched two-year scheme in the same area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Available information relates to the counties of South and Mid Glamorgan where there are 5,339 trainees currently on YTS. As a result of two year YTS, 2,273 continuation (second year) places will be available in the area in addition to the 6,524 planned first-year places.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have completed YTS schemes in *(a)* Cardiff and *(b)* Cardiff West, since the scheme's

inception; how many persons completing the scheme have found full-time or part-time employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information as requested is not available. Available information relates to the counties of South and Mid Glamorgan, where, since the inception of YTS in April 1983, there have been 19,732 entrants. The most recent Manpower Services Commission 100 per cent. follow-up survey showed that 46 per cent. of those leaving YTS in this area between April and November 1985 found full or part-time employment.

Job Creation

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many new jobs have been created in the Cardiff travel-to-work area during the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is not available. Available statistics relate to net changes in numbers of employees in employment and not to gross numbers of jobs created or lost. These figures are not available below regional level between census of employment dates.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total number of entrants to date to the enterprise allowance scheme in the Cardiff area; at what cost to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Available figures relate to the counties of South and Mid Glamorgan, where, between August 1983 and April 1986, 2,574 people entered the enterprise allowance scheme at a cost of £3·8 million. This is a highly successful scheme which following the Budget, is to be expanded in Wales to a target of 5,585 places by March 1987.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will itemise the sum totals and headings which account for the increases in the estimated 1986-87 cash budget to the Welsh Development Agency over the provisional cash budget in 1985-86.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is published each year in the Supply Estimates.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have been employed by the Welsh Development Agency in each year from 1979 to 1986.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of staff employed in the Welsh Development Agency at 31 March each year is given in the following table:

Year at 31 March	
1979	499
1980	500
1981	491
1982	501
1983	482
1984	433
1985	404
1986	421·5

Schoolchildren (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the primary school children in the local education authority areas of Wales speak Welsh as their principal language.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Assessments of fluency made by head teachers in September 1985 indicate that the proportions of all pupils in primary schools whose principal language was Welsh were as follows:

	Per cent.
Clwyd	4·7
Dyfed	20·3
Gwent	0·1
Gwynedd	41·1
Mid Glamorgan	0·6
Powys	5·5
South Glamorgan	1·0
West Glamorgan	2·5
WALES	7·0

These figures exclude pupils whose principal language was not Welsh, but who could speak Welsh fluently.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what funds have been made available, and to whom, to ensure the production and translation of new textbooks into the Welsh language for the proposed General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations courses.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Department is funding two projects involving the preparation of new Welsh medium materials appropriate to GCSE courses. One is in the department of education, University College of Swansea costing some £30,000 and the other in the department of education, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, at an estimated cost of over £500,000.

Mr. D.E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what funds are being made available to local education authorities to purchase Welsh language textbooks needed for the new general certificate of secondary education examination courses.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Local education authorities determine both the levels and the degree of priority of funding for school text books. As far as GCSE courses are concerned, they are free to apply for additional resources for books and equipment for 1987-88 and 1988-89 under the education support grant mechanism.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what funds have been made available for the translation of general certificate of secondary education syllabuses into the Welsh language; and if these funds have been sufficient.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No central assistance has been made available for the production of GCSE syllabuses in any language.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many subject syllabuses for the proposed GCSE examination have been translated into the Welsh language.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if teachers who teach through the medium of the Welsh language will have facilities equal to their counterparts who teach through the medium of English in Wales for teaching the new courses for the general certificate of secondary education examination.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 17 March 1986, at column *37*.

Sheep Rustling

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to introduce measures to curb sheep rustling in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This is a matter for the chief constables of Wales who are responsible for enforcing the law concerning theft of livestock.

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated cost of the proposal to privatise the Welsh water authority; and what proportion of this cost will be borne by ratepayers.

Mr. Mark Robinson: It is too early to estimate the costs of privatisation, but the costs will be more than offset by the sale proceeds.

Dyfed (Residential Children's Homes)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many children will be affected by proposals to close all of Dyfed county council residential children's homes;

(2) in the light of recent proposals to close Dyfed's residential children's homes, what provisions will be made for those adolescents who cannot be placed in resource centres or foster homes because of severe emotional and social problems.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This is a matter for Dyfed county council to determine in line with its assessment of the needs and best interests of the children in care. I understand that the council has not reached any final decisions and that the proposals do not include the closure of all residential children's homes in the county.

Bus Services

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what measures have been taken to ensure the future of non-profit-making bus routes in rural Wales after deregulation.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Section 63 of the Transport Act 1985 places a duty on county councils to secure any public passenger transport service within their areas which they consider appropriate and which would not otherwise be available. It also empowers district councils to take similar action. Section 108 of the Act provides for the introduction of a rural transport innovation grant, and £100 000 has been allocated to this grant scheme in Wales in 1986-87. Section 109 of the Act makes provision for a transitional rural bus grant to assist rural bus services during the changeover to the new system. £50 million will be made available in Great Britain over a four-year period from 1 April 1986.

Farm Prices

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will outline the effects of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' decision on farm prices on Welsh farmers.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The basis of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' agreement on farm support prices for 1986-87 involves a freeze in common support prices for those commodities of particular significance to Wales. However, as a result of the devaluing significance to Wales. However, as a result of the devaluing of the green pound our farmers will receive increases in support prices, in national currencies, of 2·75 per cent. in the livestock sector and 1·35 per cent. in the arable sector.

Although there is to be a further 3 per cent. cut in milk quotas to be achieved over the next three years, this is necessary to reduce the continuing milk surplus. The arrangements for achieving the reduction include a reasonable degree of flexibility for each member state according to its own circumstances.

For beef and sheep the existing support schemes continue essentially unchanged and we were successful in removing a number of unsatisfactory features in the proposals which would have discriminated against United Kingdom and Welsh producers.

The agreement will have a negligible effect on food prices and represents a further significant step towards improving the common agricultural policy while safeguarding the competitive position of our own farmers.

Schools (Closure)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines his Department offers to local education authorities on the closure of small schools.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Guidance is given in Welsh Office Circular 30/81 issued to local education authorities on 20 July 1981.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools with *(a)* fewer than 15 pupils, *(b)* between 15 and 20 pupils, *(c)* between 20 and 24 pupils, *(d)* between 25 and 29 pupils and *(e)* over 30 pupils have been closed by each local education authority in Wales in each year since 1970.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Comprehensive information in the form requested is not available. A figure for the total number of nursery and primary schools closed could be misleading; many closures occur as part of wider schemes of reorganisation or amalgamation which can incorporate the establishment of new schools. During the period January 1970 to January 1986 there was a net increase of 17 maintained nursery schools and a net reduction of 194 maintained primary schools in Wales.

Gittins Report

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what developments there have been with regard to policy on primary education in Wales since the Gittins report.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Government policy in respect of primary schools is stated in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469, published March 1985). Within Wales, Her Majesty's Inspectorate has issued the following papers: "Curriculum and Organisation of Primary Schools in Wales" (Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1984); "Links between Parents, Community and Primary Schools" (June 1985); and "Leadership in Primary Schools" (June 1985), copies of which I have placed in the Library.

Homeless Persons

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people classified as homeless in Wales are currently accommodated at local authority expense in hostels or boarding houses.

Mr. Mark Robinson: At 31 December 1985 the number of households in Wales classified as homeless and resident at local authority expense in bed-and-breakfast accommodation or hostels was 20 and 127 respectively.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the cost per week to each local authority in Wales currently of housing people classified as homeless in hostels or boarding houses; and what was the total expense incurred for all of Wales in 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Figures for local authority expenditure on homelessness including bed-and-breakfast accommodation are collected annually. Figures from the last financial year for which information is available (1984-85) are shown in the following table:

*Local Authority**	*Net cost per week†*
Alyn and Deeside	9·46
Carmarthen	25·83
Ceredigion	71·77
Dinefwr	93·54
Llanelli	114·31
Preseli	201·06
South Pembrokeshire	6·92
Newport	138·02
Aberconwy	39·83
Dwyfor	12·69
Meirionnydd	2·10
Rhondda	104·54
Rhymney Valley	23·00
Taff-Ely	11·25
Cardiff	1,206·33
Neath	0·79
Swansea	2·08
Total Wales (per week)	2,063·52

The all Wales total for the financial year was £107,303.

* Local authorities not shown incurred no expenditure in this category.

† Total expenditure less income from fees and charges (which includes any income which may be received direct from DHSS).

NHS Employees

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary State for Wales how many people are currently employed by the National Health Service in Wales; and what was the figure for each year from 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: It is estimated that the National Health Service in Wales employed the equivalent of 55,151 whole-time staff at 30 April 1986. Figures for previous years are given in the following table:

Staff employed by the NHS in Wales†*

	Number
1979	50,320
1980	52,025
1981	53,272
1982	54,062
1983	54,131
1984	54,528
1985	55,321

* Including staff of the Welsh Health Common Services Authority.

† Whole-time equivalents at 30 September each year.

House Building

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary State for Wales what information he has as to how many new build schemes are currently under way in Wales in *(a)* private and *(b)* public sector housing; and what has been the figure of new build completions in each sector for each year since 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Fifty-five local authority schemes were currently under way in Wales at 31 March 1986. No data are available for housing association or private sector new build schemes. The number of new build completions in the private and public sectors for each year since 1979 to 1985 is shown in the following table:

Year	*Private Sector*	*Public Sector*
1979	6,914	4,351
1980	5,838	4,622
1981	4,985	4,076
1982	5,225	2,676
1983	5,539	2,267
1984	6,433	2,744
1985	6,521	1,673

Residential Care and Nursing Homes (Inspectors)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many inspectors there are for residential care and nursing homes within Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Under the provisions of the Registered Homes Act 1984 the registration and inspection of private and voluntary residential care homes is the responsibility of local authority social services departments. For private and voluntary nursing homes the responsibility rests with district health authorities. The numbers of staff required by each authority to carry out their inspection duties under the Act is a matter for them to determine. No information is available centrally of the numbers of such staff in Wales.

Wages

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average amount earned in Wales by people working *(a)* less than 30 hours each week, *(b)* less

than 25 hours each week and *(c)* less than 20 hours each week, at the latest date for which such information is available.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the number of Welsh people under the age of 21 years who have never been engaged in full-time employment, other than on youth training and associated schemes.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is not available.

Playgroups and Nursery Schools

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current provision of *(a)* playgroups and *(b)* nursery schools in each Welsh county, expressed in days available each week.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information available is given in the following table:

	Number of premises		
	*Nursery schools**	*Day nurseries/ centres†‡*	*Playgroups†‡*
Clwyd	5	14	174
Dyfed	4	—	160
Gwent	15	4	114
Gwynedd	—	4	147
Mid Glamorgan	23	6	123
Powys	—	—	61
South Glamorgan	10	17	119
West Glamorgan	2	7	49

* At September 1985.
† At 31 March 1985.
‡ Includes facilities provided by local authorities and other registered premises.

The nursery schools are open for five days each week, but no information is available centrally on the number of days for which day nurseries/centres and playgroups are open. These figures exclude provision for nursery classes in maintained primary schools.

Rate Registers

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will introduce legislation to give increased rights of inspection to the general public of the rate registers of councils existing prior to the 1974 reorganisation of local government in Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent representations he has received about the arrangements for custody of, and for public access to, the rate registers of local authorities in Wales existing prior to the 1974 local government reorganisation; if he has any plans to seek powers to transfer these from the custody of county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I am writing to the hon. Gentleman.

DEFENCE

Binary Nerve Gas Weapons

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the statement to the House by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley) 28 April, *Official Report*, column 665, regarding the non-deployment of United States binary nerve gas weapons in the United Kingdom in peacetime, if he will define the term peacetime in this context; whether deployment of such weapons in the United Kingdom would be allowed at a time of heightened international tension preceding actual hostilities, or only after a formal declaration of war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: If a request for deployment of United States binary chemical munitions were ever to be received, it would be a matter for decision by the British Government of the day in the light of all the circumstances prevailing at the time. Any deployment to the United Kingdom at any time would require the consent of Her Majesty's Government.

US Air Force (Military Aircraft)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans to allow the United States air force to deploy F-111 aircraft at Boscombe Down.

Mr. Stanley: The United States Air Force deploys F-111 aircraft to Boscombe Down from time to time on a temporary basis, in order to give US-based crews experience of operating in Europe and to demonstrate their ability to reinforce NATO rapidly. Boscombe Down is designated a "Colocated Operating Base", which means that in times of tension or war the base would be shared with the USAF.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any civil airports in Scotland have been authorised for use by United States air force fighter planes or bombers.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Defence why the Property Services Agency gave an extra payment of £1 million to the Association of Metropolitan Authorities in respect of 35, Great Smith street.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Property Services Agency has made no such payment. I understand, however, that £1·037 million was paid recently by International Military Services limited as a reverse premium for the disposal of its interest in the lease of 35 Great Smith street.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the cost to Her Majesty's Government of transporting journalists to Hillsborough for the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement; what other expenses of journalists were met; and whether the Government of the Irish Republic shared in any such costs.

Mr. Scott: On the day that the Anglo-Irish agreement was signed, journalists were transported from Belfast international airport to Hillsborough castle and back at a cost of £700 to Her Majesty's Government.

Telecommunications facilities and refreshments were provided at Hillsborough. The Irish Government were not asked to contribute towards the cost.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the reply given by him on 24 April, *Official Report*, column *201*, if he will explain whether the calculation of a possible cost overrun by Harland and Wolff when building the auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel will include a consideration of fixed costs as well as more direct on-costs; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: Harland and Wolff's tender price provided for direct labour and material costs and a full allocation of overheads. Calculation of actual costs on the contract will be on the same basis.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the nature and extent of the subsidy available to Harland and Wolff for merchant shipbuilding and if it covers the yard's capital expenditure.

Dr. Boyson: Direct merchant shipbuilding subsidy to Harland and Wolff takes the form of intervention fund grants at 20·5 per cent. of contract price of ships up to 70,000 dwt; 25·5 per cent. for larger vessels. Harland and Wolff also receive interest-free loans and other miscellaneous grants to fund its operating costs, including capital expenditure. In 1985-86 those grants and loans totalled £36·5 million.

Mr. Denzil Davies asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what criteria will be used to judge whether Harland and Wolff keep within, or exceed, their tendered cost estimate for the construction of the first auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel.

Dr. Boyson: Actual costs incurred on the contract will be monitored and compared with the detailed breakdown of estimates included in Harland and Wolff's tender.

Public Employment (Equality)

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland waht action he proposes to take to ensure equal employment and promotion opportunites for all within Government Departments and public bodies.

Dr. Boyson: The equal opportunites policy statement published on 4 December 1984 sets out the Government's policy for the Northern Ireland Civil Service. A comprehensive system for monitoring the religous affiliations of its non-industrial staff has been introduced. I expect the first monitoring report to be available before the summer recess. It is also proposed to extend these arrangements in due course to industrial staff following consultation with the trade unions.

As for organisations outside the Northern Ireland Civil Service, consideration is being given to how the approach to equality of opportunity in employment could be made more comprehensive, consistent and effective.

Southern Health Board

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what assessment he has made of the implications for the level of employment in the ambulance service within the Southern health board area of the financial cut-backs imposed on the board by his Department;

(2) what assessment he has made of the implications for the numbers employed in the home help service within the Southern health board area of the financial cut-backs imposed on the board by his Department;

(3) what assessment he has made of the implications for the hours worked in the home help service within the Southern health board area of the financial cut-backs imposed on the board by his Department;

(4) what assessment he has made of the implications for the numbers employed by the Southern health board area of the financial cut-backs imposed on the board by his Department;

(5) what assessment he has made of the implications for the number of operative ambulance vehicles used within the Southern health board area of the financial cut-backs imposed on the board by his Department;

(6) what account he has made of the implications for the level of hospital provision in the Southern health board area of the financial cut-backs imposed on the board by his Department.

Mr. Needham: There have been no cut-backs in the financial allocations to the Southern health and social services board. Since 1979-80 its allocations have in fact been increased by 15·5 per cent. in real terms. In common with all other health authorities throughout the United Kingdom, the Southern board has to live within its budget and to improve its efficiency in order to free resources to meet emerging pressures for both service development and pay increases. The detailed measures taken to achieve these objectives are a matter for the board.

Central Services Agency

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what responsibility he has for the Northern Ireland Central Services Agency.

Mr. Needham: The agency is appointed by and operates under the direction of the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland, which is in turn subject to the direction and control of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

ENVIRONMENT

Soviet Nuclear Accident

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when scientists employed by the Government Departments or in nationalised industries first had contacts with Soviet scientists of officials concerning the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear power station incident.

Mrs. Rumbold: Discussions between officials on the supply and use of protective clothing commenced on Tuesday 6 May.

Urban Programme

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* bids made under phase 26 of the traditional urban programme for both holiday projects and main phase schemes, indicating approvals given.

Sir George Young: The information is given in summary form in the following table:

Traditional urban programme 1986-87

Region	*Main phase*	*Holiday*	*Total*
	Total number of bids received		
London	128	75	203
Northern	34	30	64
West Midlands	51	23	74
East Midlands	40	7	47
Yorkshire and Humberside	79	8	87
Eastern	33	5	38
Merseyside	57	11	68
North West	55	27	82
South West	27	12	39
South East	14	—	14
Total	518	198	716
	Total number of projects approved		
London	51	35	86
Northern	12	17	29
West Midlands	20	14	34
East Midlands	11	5	16
Yorkshire and Humberside	21	28	49
Eastern	6	2	8
Merseyside	21	12	33
North West	24	20	44
South West	11	4	15
South East	1	—	1
Total	177	137	314

I shall send the hon. Member a full list of approved schemes shortly, and place a copy in the Library of the House. A total of £36·5 million has been allocated to the traditional urban programme in 1986-87, of which £6·62 million was available for new approvals, including £800,000 for holiday projects.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he received the letter of 4 April 1985 sent by Mr. R. A Shearing of 43 Lansdowne avenue, Grimsby, with regard to the proposed nuclear dump at Killingholme; if he has yet replied to this letter; and if he will make it his policy to allow Mr. Shearing time to reply to him before he brings forward the special development order;

(2) when he received the letter of 7 April 1985 from Mrs. V. Ingram of 116 Pelham avenue, Grimsby, with regard to the proposed nuclear dump site at Killingholme; if he has yet replied to this letter; and if he will allow Mrs. Ingram time to reply to him before he brings forward his proposals;

(3) whether he intends to collect evidence from the Anglian water authority on the four possible nuclear dump sites before a special development order is laid;

(4) what consultations he has had with the Anglian water authority about the drainage, water table, dampness and water flow problems of the land at Killingholme, South Humberside, selected by NIREX as a possible nuclear dump;

(5) if he will reply to Councillor John Colebrook of 56 Gloucester avenue, Grimsby, South Humberside DN34 5BZ, about the South Killingholme potential nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for the recipient to reply before the special development order is laid; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what account was taken by NIREX of drainage and water table problems of sites considered for nuclear dumping;

(7) whether his review of the question of radioactive dose equivalent to critical groups will be completed before the geological exploration of near-surface disposal sites begins; and what implications it has for the design, siting and operation of nuclear dumps;

(8) how many sites will be producing waste which will be taken to the Government's proposed low-level nuclear waste dump once it is in operation; how many are accessible for rail transportation; how many would be sending waste by road; what preference he has expressed to NIREX for transportation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what study has been made of the implications of the nuclear incident at the Russian nuclear waste dump in the Southern Urals in the 1950s for nuclear dumping in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Soviet Union has never acknowledged that such an incident took place. If a waste disposal site was involved, it is unlikely that the site was constructed to the standards the Government would require for a site in this country.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to *(a)* how many other countries use near-surface disposal facilities for low-level nuclear waste, *(b)* how many use deep disposal facilities and *(c)* what are the comparative cost ratios of the one method to the other; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: *(a)* In the Western industrialised countries, France, the United States and Canada use near-surface disposal facilities for low-level nuclear waste.

(b) Only Sweden and West Germany will have deep disposal facilities before 1990.

(c) Comparative costs are given in "Assessment of Best Practicable Environmental Options" Her Majesty's Stationery Office March 1986. However, these costs are kept under review by UK NIREX Ltd. as new information becomes available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion and acreage of the British Isles has clay soil suitable for the shallow trench disposal of nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: Acreage figures are not available. However, I shall send to the hon. Member a pamphlet issued by UK NIREX Ltd. which identifies the main clay areas in the United Kingdom and the areas of search for sites based on clay which NIREX has considered.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give his reaction to recommendations 6, 9, 12, 20, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 34, 35, 37, 39, 40 and 41 of the report of the Environment Committee on nuclear waste before laying any special development order.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The Government are considering these recommendations and will respond in due course.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the institutions, laboratories and organisations at present producing low-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 May 1986, c. *492*]: I shall arrange for a list to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Envirionment if he will set out the collection procedures for low-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 14 May 1986, c. *492*]: Certificates of registration issued under section 1 of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 require that the user keeps records showing:

(i) the date upon which each registered substance was brought on to the premises.

(ii) the date on which each registered substance was removed from the premises, the address of the premises to which it was removed, and the name of the occupier of those premises.

(iii) the names of and the sum total of becquerels of all the specified radionuclides contained in each registered substance at the time it was brought on to the premises and at the time it was removed therefrom.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what instructions he has given to hospitals, universities and research laboratories on collection and safety procedures for low-level nuclear waste;

(2) what instructions he has given to hospitals, universities and research laboratories using the national disposal service at Harwell on low-level nuclear waste and its collection; and what kinds of waste may be disposed of through normal non-nuclear rubbish collection.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 May 1986, c. *492*]: All authorities to dispose of radioactive waste are issued uner section 6 of the Radioactive Substances act 1960 and permission to store is given uner section 7. These authorisations are issued subject to conditions set out in the certificates, which vary depending on individual circumstances. Conditions for the disposal of waste through normal non-nuclear disposal routes are set out in paragraph 54 of the "Guide to the Administration of the Act". Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1982.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to introduce compacting of nuclear waste at Drigg; and what assessment he has made of the costs of this.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 May 1986, c. 492]: The Drigg site is operated by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. under the terms of an authorisation issued by my Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. BNFL is planning to compact wastes from Sellafield in 1987. The authorising Departments are reviewing the terms of the present authorisation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many institutions use the nuclear waste disposal service; what method of transport is used, and what are the annual costs of providing this service.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 May 1986, c. *492*]: 169 institutions are currently authorised to use the national disposal service. Transport is almost entirely by road and the costs are borne by the user.

Royal Parks

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department has received each year from the London Marathon Board since 1981 for net costs of additional works and facilities provided in the royal parks specifically for the marathon.

Mr. Tracey: Net costs are as follows:

	£
1981	1,884
1982	681
1983	920
1984	474
1985	264
1986	*440

*still to be charged

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the income received from facility fees for the use of the royal parks in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Tracey: Income received from facility fees (principally for filming) is as follows:

	£
1984-85	23,450
1985-86	27,550

Housing (London)

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of the balance between the number of dwellings in London and the number of households there; and if he will make a statement of the implications of this balance for planning policy in London.

Mr. Tracey: The 1981 population census indicated a numerical excess of dwellings compared with households in London, but such an excess is not necessarily a satisfactory indicator of absence of pressure of demand for housing in an area; correspondingly it does not imply that housing provision can now be given a low weight in London planning policy. Some dwellings are not actually available (being vacant and awaiting or undergoing repair and renovation, second homes and so on; and the census total of households does not include some potential households that would live separately if they could, or would be attracted to London if they could find accommodation there.

Okehampton Bypass

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he intends to take to ensure the South-West water authority has access to all the information arising from the supplementary soil tests currently being conducted along the proposed route of the Okehampton bypass;

(2) following the letter of 26 March from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member

for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs Rumbold) to Lady Sayer, what consultations he intends to have with the South-West water authority on the possible contamination by arsenic of the rivers East and West Okement arising from the construction of the Okehampton bypass on the southern route;

(3) what consultations he had with the South-West water authority about the possible contamination of the rivers West and East Okement by metals, including arsenic, during the construction of the Okehampton bypass along the southern route;

(4) if he will publish the correspondence he has had with the South-West water authority on the subject of the metallic contamination of water courses in the vicinity of the southern route of the Okehampton bypass.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Anglian Water Authority

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied that the Anglian water authority has complied with its statutory obligations under the Water Resources Act 1963 in refusing to determine minimum flows for the river Wensum; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Under the 1963 Act water authorities are required to consider for which inland waters minimum acceptable flows ought to be determined. My information is that the Anglian water authority has considered this matter in respect of the river Wensum.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied that the Anglian water authority has complied with all its statutory consultation procedures in respect of the Costessey Intake Order 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend made the Costessey intake order on 23 October 1985. Consequently, he is now functus officio in this matter. Any questions about compliance with statutory procedures would be for the courts to resolve.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied that the Anglian water authority has complied with its statutory duty under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in serving notice of variation to abstraction licence 7/34/11/5/399; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: A water authority is required to consult the Nature Conservancy Council before carrying out works or operations only if the council has notified it that the area affected is of special interest. I understand that in this case no such notification has been made.

Local Government Grant

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) of 7 May, *Official Report*, columns *146-62*, he will set out the means by which the calculation of the additional amount of recycled grant was arrived at for *(a)* Newham, *(b)* Croydon, *(c)* Ealing, *(d)* Barnet and *(e)* Hillingdon.

Mrs. Rumbold: The amount of recycled grant is the difference between the total of block grant payable under the settlement poundage schedule on the basis of latest estimates of local authority spending and the total available for block grant under the Rate Support Grant Report 1986-87. It is distributed to authorities through a reduction in the grant-related poundage (GRP) schedule.

Recycling £500 million block grant would reduce the national GRP by 8·12p and the GRP of the outer London boroughs by 6·36p. The underclaim of £628 million, estimated from local authority budgeted expenditures returned on BG/1986/87/12 forms, reduces the national GRP by 10·19p, and the GRP of the outer London boroughs by 7·97p.

To calculate an individual authority's entitlement to recycled grant, it is necessary to multiply the product of its rateable value and settlement multiplier by the reduction in the GRP for its class of authority. This applies to all authorities except those who are out of block grant and those in receipt of 100 per cent. grant. Hillingdon was in the former category at the settlement spending assumption.

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to allow the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee to commission independent research and build up its own independent secretariat.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government are considering the Environment Committee's recommendation and will respond in due course.

Parking Fines

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *370*, he will provide a breakdown of the parking paid on behalf of Government Departments.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is as follows:

	Numbers
Scottish Office	167
Department of Energy	157
Welsh Office	34
Department of Employment	11
Cabinet Office	10
Department of Environment	7
Management and Personnel Office	7
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	6
National Audit Office	6
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	5
Department of Trade and Industry	5
HM Treasury	5
HMSO	2
Department of Education and Science	2
Central Office of Information	2
Northern Ireland Office	1
National Economic Development Corporation	1
ACAS	1
TOTAL	429

Radiation

Mr. Crouch asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make public details of incidents involving the release of radioactivity.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: All incidents which are reported to the Radiochemical Inspectorate and which involve the release of radioactivity into the environment, however small, will be reported to Ministers at the Department of the Environment. All these will be published.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Job Creation

15. **Mr. Terry Davis** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, further to the statement of the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) of 29 April, *Official Report*, column *818*, he will give his latest estimate of the number of net new jobs created in the economy since June 1983.

Mr. Lawson: Almost one million.

Interest Rates

16. **Mr. Pike** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the current levels of United Kingdom interest rates.

17. **Mr. Forman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement about the level of interest rates.

28. **Mr. Latham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on interest rates.

Dr. Twinn asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Members to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart).

39. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what causes he attributes the current real level of interest rates in the United Kingdom in comparison with those prevailing in the other Group of Five countries.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A number of factors influence the relative levels of real interest rates in different countries.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

18. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for the public sector borrowing requirement for 1986-87.

Mr. MacGregor: The forecast is £7·1 billion, as published in the financial statement and Budget report.

Unemployment Costs

19. **Mr. Clay** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of *(a)* the total cost and *(b)* the cost per person of unemployment for 1986-87.

Mr. MacGregor: The overall cost of unemployment and supplementary benefit paid to the unemployed is estimated to be £5·6 billion in 1986-87. In addition, it is estimated that £1·15 billion will be paid in housing benefit, a benefit which can continue to be paid if the recipient finds employment. Taken together these benefits average about £2,500 per head.

23. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer of the current level of unemployment.

Mr. MacGregor: The overall cost to the Exchequer of unemployment and supplementary benefit to the unemployed is estimated at £5·6 billion. In addition, it is estimated that £1·15 billion will be paid in housing benefit, a benefit which can continue to be paid if the claimant finds employment.

24. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the cost of unemployment pay to single persons under the age of 25 years.

Mr. MacGregor: I regret that estimates of expenditure on this group of beneficiaries could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Company Taxation

20. **Mr. Wrigglesworth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the effect of mergers and acquisitions on the criteria governing the liability to and incidence of company taxation.

Mr. Brooke: None.

Petrol Prices

21. **Mr. Harris** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how petrol pump prices have moved since the Budget; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: Since the Budget petrol prices have fallen by more than 10p per gallon.

Value Added Tax

22. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to discuss the EEC sixth directive on value added tax with his European counterparts.

Mr. Brooke: Ministers of all member states regularly discuss aspects of the EC value added tax system.

14. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about automatic penalties for value added tax defaults, introduced in the Finance Act 1985.

Mr. Brooke: A number.

Raw Material (Costs)

25. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated benefit to industry of the fall in fuel and raw material costs over the past year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In the year to April 1986, the prices of materials and fuel purchased by manufacturing industry fell by 9 per cent. This has resulted in substantial cost savings, and profits of non-North sea industrial and commercial companies are expected to show a further rise in 1986.

Third-World Debt

26. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with other Finance Ministers regarding Third-world debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer regularly meets his foreign counterparts and in recent weeks has attended the IMF interim committee meeting in Washington and the Tokyo economic summit which endorsed the current strategy towards international debt.

Opposition Parties (Policies)

27. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Her Majesty's Treasury has revised the figures given in the written answer given by the Chief Secretary to the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) on 3 March, *Official Report*, columns *29-30*, concerning the cost of Opposition policies.

Mr. MacGregor: I wrote to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) on 12 March in response to a letter from him of 10 March. I accepted an amendment to increase the aid figure from £900 million to £1,133 million. I also accepted that there had been an overestimate in my original figure of £625 million on school buildings, maintenance and repair, which under Labour proposals should be phased more than I allowed for. I have had no response from the right hon. Member to my letter of 10 March on this or any other points in my original costing of the Labour programme. In the absence of such a response, the total of around £24 billion stands.

Privatisation

29. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the progress of Her Majesty's Government's programme of privatisation of public sector corporations.

Mr. Moore: Since 1979, we have privatised 12 major businesses with over 400,000 employees. This represents over 20 per cent. of the state industrial sector we inherited in 1979. By the end of next year, the privatisations currently under preparation will have reduced state ownership of industry by almost half.

31. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the cumulative revenue effects of the privatisation programme.

Mr. Moore: The privatisation programme affects Government finances in a number of ways. Privatisation proceeds offset public expenditure in the year in which they are received. There will be changes (in that year and subsequently) in the total net external finance of the nationalised industries; there may also be changes in the interest and dividend payments made to the Government. And, as the effects of privatisation feed through into company performance, there will be increases in receipts from direct and indirect taxation. It is not possible to estimate the net effect of these changes, as this would require knowledge of the way state-owned companies would have performed had they not been privatised.

World Debt

30. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he made at the Tokyo summit to assist a resolution of the problems of world debt.

Mr. MacGregor: All those participating in the Tokyo summit endorsed the current approach to tackling international debt problems and welcomed the progress made in implementing the Baker initiative. This is reflected in the economic declaration which was agreed, in particular paragraphs 8 to 12.

1981 Budget Proposals

32. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has received any further representations from the 364 economists who wrote to his predecessor following the Budget five years ago.

Mr. MacGregor: No. Given the strong performance of the economy and the five and a half years of uninterrupted growth since then, it is not too surprising that we have received no such further representations.

Income Tax

33. **Mr. Forth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much it would be necessary to increase the basic rate of income tax to finance an additional £1 billion of spending.

Mr. Moore: By about one penny.

46. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has commissioned any studies into the reasons why an increasing proportion of income tax revenue is paid by the 10 per cent. of taxpayers with the highest incomes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The share of income tax borne by this group has increased as a result of the growth in real earnings encouraged by the Government's economic policies.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount of income tax collected from unemployed people for each year since 1982 in Great Britain.

Mr. Moore: I assume that the hon. Member has in mind the yield of income tax arising from taxation of benefits paid to unemployed people. The yield, since these benefits were brought within the charge to income tax, is now estimated to have been of the order of £600 million in each full year. These estimates are subject to a wide margin of error and may be revised in the light of further information from the survey of personal incomes.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the latest figures available on the gross income in pound sterling equivalent at which income tax on earned income becomes payable at 29 per cent. and 50 per cent. in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France, Germany and Japan, for *(a)* a single person, *(b)* a single-wage married couple and *(c)* a single-wage couple with two children.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is given in the tables:

Table 1
Gross income in £ sterling at which income tax on employment income becomes payable at 29 per cent.

	Single person	*Married couple*	*Married couple with two dependent children*
United Kingdom	2,336	3,656	3,656
United States of America	9,285	14,900	16,260
		(30)	(28)
France	13,095	18,520	21,515
	(28)	(28)	(28·8)
Germany	6,640	12,920	14,030
Japan	14,700	14,700	16,510
	(29·7)	(29·7)	(29·7)

Table 2
Gross income in £ sterling at which income tax on employment income becomes payable at 50 per cent.

	Single person	*Married couple*	*Married couple with two dependent children*
United Kingdom	27,736	29,056	29,056
United States of America	25,240	53,365	54,110
	(48·4)	(51·05)	(51·05)
France	51,435	51,650	51,650
	(52)	(55)	(55)
Germany	15,670	30,970	32,090
Japan	32,770	33,630	35,340
	(52·25)	(52·25)	(52·25)

Note:

1. The figures relate to income of the year 1986 (1986-87 in the case of the United Kingdom) except for France where they relate to 1985, as France does not fix its 1986 rates until the end of the year.

2. Conversions to sterling were made at the purchasing power equivalent of sterling in November 1985 (the latest date for which we have figures). The purchasing power equivalents are calculated on the basis of updated OECD figures. Purchasing power parities give a better indication of real values than exchange rates as they are calculated by reference to prices of the same basket of commodities.

3. It is assumed that the income of the married couple is wholly employment income of the husband.

4. Personal reliefs (including child tax allowances, where given, but not child benefits) employment income reliefs and other standard reliefs have been taken into account, as well as income tax relief for social security contributions in certain countries.

5.(i) The rates of 30 per cent. and 50 per cent. in the tables are actual tax rates, that is, nominal rates adjusted where appropriate for the reliefs mentioned above.

(ii) Where the actual tax rate is never precisely 30 per cent. or 50 per cent., the rate applicable to the income level in the table is given in brackets.

6. The figures in the tables reflect national taxes and, where applicable (United States of America and Japan), local income taxes at typical rates. The inclusion of local income taxes gives a more appropriate comparison.

Inflation

34. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is *(a)* the United Kingdom's current year on year inflation rate and *(b)* the current average year on year inflation rate of countries in the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Over the 12 months to March 1986, the retail prices index increased by 4·2 per cent. The annual rates of consumer price inflation, using the latest OECD data available, for other countries in the European monetary system are:

	per cent.
Belgium	*1·5
Denmark	*1·7
Germany	*0·1
France	*3·0
Netherlands	*0·7
Ireland	†4·6
Italy	*7·2

* March 1986.
† Quarter to February 1986.

36. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate of inflation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay).

Balance of Payments

35. **Mr. Evans** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect on the balance of payments of the recent drop in oil revenues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The balance of trade in oil was £200 million higher in the first quarter of 1986 than in the previous quarter. If oil prices had been unchanged the balance of trade in oil would have been £½ billion higher. Lower oil prices will have reduced profits of foreign oil companies operating in the United Kingdom, thereby improving the IPD component of the invisible balance, but figures on this are not yet available.

OECD Countries (Economic Performance)

37. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the current economic performance of the main organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. MacGregor: The communiqué issued following the OECD ministerial meeting on 17-18 April recording the conclusions and agreements reached by the Ministers starts off by noting:

"The overall economic situation in OECD countries is improving; and despite continuing concerns and difficulties, there are good grounds for confidence about the future".

A copy of the full text of the communiqué is available in the Library.

Governor of the Bank of England

38. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when was his most recent meeting with the Governor of the Bank of England; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor meets the Governor regularly to discuss a wide range of matters, but it is not the practice to disclose them.

Profit-sharing Schemes

40. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many companies now operate Treasury approved profit-sharing schemes.

Mr. Moore: A total of 1,063 all-employee share schemes have been approved by the Inland Revenue. Five

hundred and forty are profit-sharing schemes and 523 are savings-related share option schemes. Some companies have established both types of scheme.

Share Ownership

41. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the extent of personal share ownership.

Mr. Moore: A recent survey commissioned by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys on behalf of the Treasury and conducted by NOP Market Research Limited indicated that about 14 per cent. of adults (6 million) in Great Britain own shares. The survey was conducted between 12 February and 10 March 1986. Over 7,000 interviews were carried out with adults aged 16 years and above, who were selected according to a systematic probability sample designed to be representative of all adults in Great Britain.

The British Market Research Bureau's regular target group index survey of 24,000 adults aged 16 and over found that, in 1978-79, around 7 per cent. of the adult population owned shares. These surveys suggest, therefore, that the number of shareholders has roughly doubled since 1979.

Economic Management

42. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he regards as the priority objectives in managing the economy.

Mr. MacGregor: The objectives of economic policy are set out in the medium term financial strategy, updated in the 1986-87 financial statement and budget report.

Budget Strategy (Oil Prices)

43. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he makes of the impact of the present level of oil prices on his Budget announcements.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend's budget strategy allowed for the possibility of short-term fluctuations in oil prices.

Funds (Income Accumulation)

44. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about possible adverse effect on accumulations by the trustees of smaller funds of his recent incentives to charities.

Mr. Moore: We have received a number of representations that the Budget proposals to prevent abuse of charity tax reliefs may cause difficulty for some bona fide charities. As my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary said on 6 May 1986, at column 81, we fully recognise the questions that have been raised; we are considering them most carefully, and we will respond to them during the passage of the Finance Bill.

Part-time Study (Tax Deductible Costs)

45. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received in support of making fees and other costs involved as a consequence of part-time study tax deductible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: This is one matter among many raised in representations from time to time.

Channel Tunnel

47. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions his Department has held concerning customs control arrangements for the Channel fixed link.

Mr. Brooke: Customs and Excise has held wide-ranging discussions wih the promoters of the Channel fixed link and with other interested Government Departments on all aspects of control requirements and visits have been made with the promoters to Dover to study the practical arrangements for control of various types of cross-Channel traffic. Discussions are continuing, including consultation with British Rail on the procedures for the control of through rail traffic using the fixed link. There has also been initial discussion with French officials concerning the operation of juxtaposed customs controls which will require, for example, certain United Kingdom inward controls to be located in the French terminal.

Single European Act

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the proportion of total Government revenue in each European Economic Community state which is represented by receipts from the taxes and duties mentioned in the articles of the European Economic Community Single European Act.

Mr. Brooke: The latest available information relates to 1983, and shows indirect taxes on goods and services as a percentage of total taxation:

	per cent.
Belgium	26·3
Denmark	35·8
France	29·0
Germany	27·5
Greece*	43·3
Ireland	46·0
Italy	23·4
Luxembourg	23·7
Netherlands	24·1
Portugal*	43·8
Spain*	24·0
United Kingdom	29·7

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
* Greece, Portugal and Spain did not operate value added tax in 1983.

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give, for each form of indirect tax and excise duty mentioned in the European Economic Community Single European Act, the United Kingdom rates of tax or duty, the yield from each such tax or duty and the proportion of total Government revenue represented by receipts from such taxes and duties.

Mr. Brooke: The Single European Act refers to "turnover taxes, excise duties and other forms of indirect taxation". The relevant indirect taxes in the United Kingdom are value added tax, car tax and the excise duties on hydrocarbon oils, tobacco products and alcoholic drinks. The current rates of tax or duty, the latest estimate of revenue yield for 1985-86 and the proportion of Government revenue represented by these taxes and duties are as follows:

Tax/duty	Rate(s)	Yield in 1985-86* £ million	Yield as a proportion of Government revenue*† Per cent.
(a) Value added tax	15 per cent., 0 per cent.	19,300	18·2
(b) Car tax	10 per cent.	880	0·8
(c) Excise duties on:			
(i) Hydrocarbon oils:			
light oils (except AVGAS)	19·38p per litre	6,500	6·1
derv	16·39p per litre		
gas oil	1·10p per litre		
AVGAS and road fuel gas	9·69p per litre		
(ii) Tobacco products:			
cigarettes	£30·61 per 1,000 plus 21 per cent. of retail price	4,300	4·1
hand rolling tobacco	£49·64 per kg		
cigars	£47·05 per kg		
other smoking and chewing tobacco	£24·95 per kg		
(iii) Alcoholic drinks:			
spirits	£15·77 per litre	4,200	4·0
beer	£25·80 per hectolitre of beer at 1030° gravity plus £0·86 for every degree in excess of 1030°		
cider and perry	£15·80 per hectolitre		
wine and made-wine:			
not exceeding 15 per cent.	£98·00 per hectolitre		
over 15 per cent. and up to 18 per cent.	£169·00 per hectolitre		
over 18 per cent. and up to 22 per cent.	£194·00 per hectolitre		

* Provisional figures.
† Consolidated fund revenue.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Heddle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to review the provisions of section 57 of the Stamp Duty Act 1891; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No; but if my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind and will send me details I will look into it.

European Monetary System

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has published any assessment of the advantages to the United Kingdom of joining the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A memorandum was submitted by Her Majesty's Treasury to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee during the course of its inquiry into the financial and economic consequences of United Kingdom membership of the European Communities 13th report, Session 1984-85, Volume II).

North Sea Oil

Mr. Kennedy asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from oil companies about the implications of his Budget statement and of the recent fall in oil prices for the rate of incremental investment in North sea oil production.

Mr. Moore: Two letters have been received which refer to the implications for incremental investment of the recent fall in oil prices.

Income Tax and National Insurance

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total revenue obtained from income tax plus national insurance contributions together in each year since 1978-79 at current and at constant 1978-79 prices.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average amount by which public expenditure has exceeded the amount spent in 1978-79, in each year from 1979-80, in actual and real terms and as a percentage of 1978-79 figures.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Economic Costs and Changing Prices (Report)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the report to the Treasury by an advisory group, accounting for economic costs and changing prices, completed in March 1986, has not been published.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 May 1986, c. *349-50*]: This substantial report on accounting in nationalised industries was completed at the end of March. It is being considered by Ministers, and will be published in due course.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 16 May 1986

DEFENCE

Small Arms Supplies

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has concerning the total value of anticipated orders for small arms supplies to be placed with United Kingdom suppliers in the present year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: It has been decided to place contracts on Royal Ordnance plc in respect of our outstanding requirements in 1986-87 for 5·56 mm and 7·62 mm ammunition. The ammunition will be produced at Royal Ordnance plc's factory at Radway Green and the value of the contracts will be about £35 million. This is additional to orders already placed with the factory. Discussions are continuing with the company concerning requirements for the two subsequent years.

PRIME MINISTER

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Prime Minister if she expects to announce her decision on the pay award to nurses which was due for payment as from 1 April before the Whitsun recess.

The Prime Minister: An announcement will be made in due course.

Ministerial Responsibilities

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Prime Minister which Ministers in the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Offices were undertaking ministerial responsibilities, in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, respectively, at midnight on 14 April.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Northern Ireland Office the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) was duty Minister in Northern Ireland on the night of 14-15 April. Similar arrangements do not apply in the Scottish and Welsh Offices.

Cyprus

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement following her meeting with the Greek Cypriot leader, President Kyprianou, on the Greek Cypriot response to the present United Nations initiative for a settlement in Cyprus.

The Prime Minister: On my meeting with President Kyprianou, I have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in another place on 8 May. Meanwhile the UN Secretary General, with whom I discussed Cyprus on 14 May, is actively pursuing his initiative, which we continue strongly to support. I do not believe it would be helpful to comment on progress in the negotiations at this stage.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to meet the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Rauf Denktash, to discuss the favourable response by the Turkish Cypriot leadership to the present United Nations initiative for a settlement on Cyprus.

The Prime Minister: No. Mr. Denktash is kept fully in touch with our views through our High Commission in Nicosia.

Libya (American Raid)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what weight was given to the bombing of the discotheque in Berlin in her decision to authorise the use of British bases to bomb Libya.

The Prime Minister: The Government's decision was made in the light of clear evidence of the Libyan state's complicity in terrorist activity. Evidence of Libya's role in the Berlin bombing was one factor of that decision.

Dr. Kurt Waldeheim

Mr. Greville Janner asked the Prime Minister why the following documents are missing from the Public Record Office, namely, JIC (42) 507(0), JIC (43) 285(0) 3 August 1943, DEFE 3/573, CX/MSS 1250/T13, 1350/T2, 1588 Para 29, CX/MSS 1421 Para 46, 1477 Para 33, 1986 Para 46; whether any of these documents refer, directly or indirectly, to Dr. Kurt Waldheim or to German Army group E; and whether she will make copies of these documents available to the hon. and learned Gentleman for Leicester, West.

The Prime Minister: I shall reply to the hon. and learned Gentleman shortly.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Extradition

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have been extradited from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland in the six months ended 15 May.

Mr. Scott: One.

Fatalities

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of deaths due to terrorist and paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland during the six months since 15 November 1985.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the right hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the general trend in the levels of numbers of serving members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary about whom recruitment inquiries have been made by police forces in Great Britain in the past three years.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 May 1986, c. 425]: Detailed statistics on the number of recruitment inquiries received from GB forces about Royal Ulster Constabulary officers are not available prior to 1 January 1986 and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. From 1 January to 2 May 1986 the number of recruitment inquiries from GB forces in respect of Royal Ulster Constabulary officers was 43.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Statistics

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate, for each year from 1970 to 2000, of the number of young people reaching or projected to reach *(a)* minimum school-leaving age and *(b)* the age of one, two, and three years after minimum school-leaving age and, in each case, his estimate of the number known or expected to come onto the labour market in each year, separating all answers into male and female.

Mr. Dunn: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will arrange for copies of the University Grants Committee letters to universities and to specific universities and any appendices to those letters to be sent out in the next three weeks to be placed in the Library as soon as those letters are sent.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) on 15 May at column *515*.

Mr. Jonathan Savery

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had about the case of Mr. Jonathan Savery with the Avon local education authority.

Mr. Dunn: A formal hearing into the charges made against Mr. Savery is being held today. The authority has been asked to inform the Department of its outcome. In the circumstances it would not be appropriate to comment further on the case.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had from local education authorities and from teachers' unions about the need to provide extra funds to purchase books for this autumn for the new general certificate of secondary education courses.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend discussed the costs of, and planning for, the GCSE with the local authority associations on 30 April and has held meetings with the NUT and the NAHT. My right hon. Friend has indicated that he stands ready to meet all the teachers' associations to discuss these issues. Meetings will be held shortly with the PAT and the NAS/UWT. In addition, since the beginning of this year my right hon. Friend has received letters from 12 local education authorities which refer to the provision of additional resources for books.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimates he has of the cost per pupil for local education authorities of providing new books for the general certificate of secondary education courses this autumn: how much extra he has allocated per pupil for this purpose; and if he will now make extra funds available.

Mr. Dunn: It is not possible to estimate precisely, for each local education authority, the cost of providing new books for the GCSE. Demand will vary from school to school in the light of existing stocks and the individual GCSE syllabus in each subject which teachers have chosen to follow. The Department is discussing these and other matters connected with the introduction of the GCSE with the teachers' associations. These discussions will be taken into account in our consideration with the local authority associations of local authority expenditure on education generally and including the GCSE. Under the education support grant programme, as announced by my right hon. Friend on 12 May at columns 325-28, we propose to devote £20 million to the provision of books and equipment for the GCSE as a contribution to local authority expenditure in this area. This would amount to an average of £5,000 per secondary school over two years.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are teachers' salaries at all levels following the interim rise; what were the comparable figures in 1979; and what percentage increase over 1979 levels in real terms the 1986 interim award represents at all levels.

Sir Keith Joseph: The attached table shows teachers' salaries at the minimum and maximum of each scale:

£ per annum

	Scale 1	*Scale 2*	*Scale 3*	*Scale 4*	*Senior teacher*	*Deputy head**	*Head teacher*
(i) 1 April 1979							
Minimum	3,231	3,714	4,590	5,463	5,838	4,041	5,637
Maximum	5,082‡	5,652‡	6,495	7,218	7,722	9,462	12,585
(ii) 1 April 1979 at 1 April 1986 prices (adjusted by the RPI)							
Minimum	5,822	6,693	8,271	9,845	10,520	7,282	10,158
Maximum	9,158	10,185	11,704	13,007	13,915	17,051	22,679
(iii) 1 April 1986							

	Scale 1	*Scale 2*	*Scale 3*	*Scale 4*	*Senior teacher*	*Deputy head**	*Head teacher*
Minimum	6,423†	7,302	8,910	10,533	11,349	7,905	10,956
Maximum	9,804‡	10,986‡	12,627	14,151	15,330	19,104	26,259
(iv) The percentage real increase between 1 April 1979 and 1 April 1986 (iii) over (ii)							
Minimum	+10·3	+9·1	+7·7	+7·0	+7·9	+8·6	+7·9
Maximum	+7·1	+7·9	+7·9	+8·8	+10·2	+12·0	+15·8

Notes:
(i) 1 April 1979 in cash terms.
(ii) 1 April 1979 at 1 April 1986 prices (adjusted by the RPI).
(iii) 1 April 1986 including the pay rise agreed on 9 May 1986.
(iv) The percentage real increase between 1 April 1979 and 1 April 1986 ((iii) over (ii)).

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average teacher's salary following the 1 April interim award; what was the comparable figure in 1979 in real and money terms; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The average annual salary of full-time teachers in maintained primary and secondary schools in England and Wales following the 1 April 1986 payment is estimated to be £10,500. The average salary of teachers at 1 April 1979 was £5,400 or £9,731 at 1 April 1986 prices (adjusted by the RPI). These figures exclude all allowances.

Llandough Hospital (Pneumoconiosis Research Unit)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science where research work previously done at the pneumoconiosis research unit at Llandough hospital is now being done since the closure of that unit.

Mr. Walden: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Copyright

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) when Her Majesty's Government intend to ratify the Paris text of the Berne convention;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to incorporate into United Kingdom law the provisions of article 9 of the Paris text of the Berne convention, in so far as it relates to copyright protection for visual artists and photographers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The requirements of article 9 of the Paris text of the Berne convention, so far as they relate to visual artists and photographers, are met by section 3 of the Copyright Act 1956. There are, however, a number of changes which will need to be made to other parts of our law before the Government can ratify the Paris text. The Government intend to make these changes as part of the general reform of copyright law proposed in the White Paper "Intellectual Property and Innovation", Cmnd. 9712. The necessary legislation will be introduced as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits and ratification of the Paris text will follow.

Newspaper Wholesaling

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and industry if he will make a statement on the Director-General of Fair Trading's review of newspaper wholesaling, published on 14 May.

Mr. Howard: I welcome the publication of this timely review of newspaper wholesaling. Both I and the Director-General of Fair Trading have for some time been concerned about features of the market, in particular the refusal to supply newspapers to certain retailers with its effect on small shopkeepers and new businesses.

The Director-General has made some constructive proposals for further action which will involve discussions with interested parties. I hope that all sectors of the trade will give him their fullest co-operation and that the outcome of this review will help to remedy the grievances which exist at present.

Travel-to-Work Areas

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what magnitude of error in the employment census returns for a travel-to-work area would be regarded by his Department as sufficient to determine that that area should be included in the assisted area map, despite an original decision, based on the faulty returns, not to do so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 May 1986, c. 502]: Although relative annual average unemployment was the main criterion used for assessing an area's need for assisted area status, a number of other factors were also taken into account. Any corrected unemployment rate would, therefore, have to be related to those other factors. The errors which have been discovered would not justify amendments to the assisted areas map introduced in November 1984.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Officers

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the work now taking place on empty prison officers' quarters at Wandsworth prison; what is the cost of this work; and if money has already been allocated for all work to be done.

Mr. Mellor: Rewiring vacant quarters at a cost of £2,250 has begun; funds have been allocated for future work.

Motoring Offences

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many motorists in the Metropolitan police area were *(a)* cautioned for exceeding the speed limit under section 89 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and *(b)* convicted for exceeding the speed limit for each year since 1976.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information relates to written warnings and findings of guilt for all speed limit offences and is published annually by police force area in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (tables 18 and 19 of the issue for 1984). In 1983 and 1984 there were, respectively, about 1,300 and 900 written warnings and about 24,500 and 32,700 findings of guilt for these offences in the Metropolitan police district. Of the latter, about 24,300 and 31,700 respectively were for speeding offences which the police would normally prosecute under section 89 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, or equivalent earlier legislation (that is offences not involving speed limits for special types of vehicle or speeding on motorways). Earlier figures for findings of guilt under section 89 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many motorists were convicted of *(a)* driving or attempting to drive when unfit through drink or drugs under section 5(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1972 and *(b)* driving or attempting to drive with blood alcohol concentrations above the prescribed limit under section 6(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1972 in the Metropolitan police area for the last 10 years;

(2) how many *(a)* screening breath tests and *(b)* evidential breath tests were given by the specialist traffic police and by divisional officers, respectively, for the most recent 10-year period or any convenient period in the Metropolitan police area;

(3) how many motorists in the Metropolitan police area were given *(a)* screening breath tests and *(b)* evidential breath tests; and what was the number of subsequent convictions for the last 10 years including the most recent year available.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information is given in the table; that shown as not readily available could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The statistics on screening breath tests and evidential tests cannot be compared directly with those on court proceedings because they are obtained from separate collections which are not subsequently reconciled. Information on the functional status of the police officers administering screening or evidential breath tests is not available.

Screening breath tests required, evidential tests required and findings of guilt for drink-driving offences in the Metropolitan Police District
Metropolitan Police District *Number of tests required and number of offences*

Year	Screening breath tests required*	Evidential test required*			Findings of guilt for drink-driving offences			
		Blood or urine	Breath	Total	Driving, or attempting to drive		Other offences†	Total‡
					While unfit from drink or drugs	With alcohol in the breath, blood or urine above the prescribed limit		
1975	18,500	..	n/a	..	..	..	..	..
1976	16,400	..	n/a	..	..	..	..	..
1977	15,200	..	n/a	..	..	..	..	9,300
1978	15,600	..	n/a	..	..	..	..	9,600
1979	20,000	..	n/a	..	..	..	..	10,900
1980	21,000	..	n/a	..	..	..	..	12,300
1981	19,700	15,200	n/a	15,200	2,300	7,800	1,300	11,400
1982	24,000	18,500	n/a	18,500	2,500	7,800	1,600	11,800
1983‖	31,400	•7,100	n/a	23,300	2,400	11,600	2,300	16,300
1983¶	—	•3,100	13,000					
1984	32,100	4,600	18,000	22,600	2,100	14,100	3,500	19,700

.. not readily availble
n/a not applicable
* Includes failure or refusal to provide
† Includes offences of being in charge of a motor vehicle while unfit through drink or drugs or having alcohol in the breath, blood or urine above the prescribed limits; or failing to provide a sample for initial breath test or evidential analysis.
‡ Some persons with a single evidential test requirement may be found guilty of more than one offence.
‖ 1 January to 5 May 1983
¶ 6 May to 31 December 1983
• After 6 May 1983, blood and urine tests were only required if an evidential breath sample could not be provided for a reason other than refusal

Violent Crime

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the extent to which statistically either the perpetrators or the victims of crimes of violence against the person are under the influence of alcohol at the time of the offence in question; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No statistics are collected on the consumption of alcohol by violent offenders or their victims. Research suggests that the relationship between alcohol and crime is very complex.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has any plans to conduct further research into the effects of the fear of crime.

Mr. Mellor: Findings from the British crime survey on fear of crime have been published in Home Office research

studies and two further reports, commissioned from outside researchers, are awaited. Further research is under consideration.

Victims Support Scheme

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he make a statement on the priorities of the victims support scheme.

Mr. Mellor: The victims support movement does valuable work as a voluntary service providing practical and emotional support to the victims of crime. The determination of priorities must be a matter for the movement itself, in consultation with the police and other services with which local schemes are closely involved. The Government will continue to encourage victims support by providing financial assistance to the National Association of Victims Support Schemes and, under various central Government programmes, to some local schemes.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if funding for new police units to combat drug abuse will have to be found by police authorities from existing resources.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes. The rate support grant settlement for 1986-87 takes account of additional expenditure required for the deployment of 240 officers in drugs wings in England and Wales.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take in the light of the 1985 annual report by the board of visitors at Wandsworth prison in relation to conditions in the prison.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend will shortly write to the chairman of the board of visitors indicating how the matters of concern to the board are being followed up.

A303 (Cruise Missile Convoy)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in the police investigation of the incident on Wednesday 7 May at countess roundabout on the A303 when an unidentified liquid was allegedly squirted at members of the public from the vehicles of a cruise missile convoy.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Wiltshire that he is investigating allegations from six members of the public. Articles of their clothing are being sent for forensic examination. The investigation is still in its early stages.

Metropolitan Police (Air Surveillance)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will detail the occasions on which the hele-tele surveillance camera has been used by the Metropolitan police since December 1985; and what was the cost of its use on each occasion.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the hele-tele surveillance camera was used 11 times between 1 January and 12 May 1986 for the following purposes:

(a) to assist security operations connected with the Royal visit of the King of Spain;
(b) to assist with traffic control at major sporting events, including the FA and Rugby League cup finals; and
(c) to assist with the command and control of police officers at demonstrations and marches.

Separate costs for the use of this equipment are not available.

Metropolitan Police (Weapons)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Metropolitan police have purchased any of the following weapons from the Trebor Corporation of America: stun gun, stun burst and stinger 37; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Leicester (Visit)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will report on his visit to Leicester on Friday 9 May.

Mr. Hurd: During my visit I had discussions with the chief constable and some of his officers, in particular about the policing of inner city areas. Later I visited the Wesley hall community project and the central west area further education office where I discussed a range of subjects with members of the local community. I also visited the Anchor club—a club for ex-offenders—and undertook various party functions.

Community Radio (Wales)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be in a position to announce the grants of franchises for community radio stations in Wales.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) and the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) on 6 May 1986 at column 19.

Magistrates' Courts (Wales)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases were heard *(a)* entirely through the medium of the Welsh language and *(b)* partly through the medium of the Welsh language in each of the magistrates' courts of Wales in each year since 1967.

Mr. Mellor: By virtue of the Welsh Language Act 1967, the Welsh language may be used in courts in Wales by any party, witness or person who desires to use it. There is no requirement for statistical records to be kept of such use, and the information requested is therefore not available.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which of the chief clerks to the magistrates' courts in Wales have a sufficient command of the Welsh language to be able to conduct their business through the medium of that language.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not maintained centrally.

Gwent Passport Office

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that the telephone at the Gwent passport office is promptly answered; what have been the causes of recent delays in answering calls from members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The telephone inquiry points at the Newport passport office are fully manned. However, the office is having to deal with an abnormal number of telephone inquiries about delays in dealing with postal passport applications. These delays arise from increased demand, recent disruption of postal services in south Wales and the residual effects of industrial action in passport offices earlier this year. Steps are being taken to reduce the backlog of postal applications as quickly as possible. This will reduce the number of telephone inquiries and should ensure that callers receive the normal prompt response.

British Overseas Citizens

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has anything to add to the statement he made to the House on 13 May about the numbers of British overseas citizens throughout the world.

Mr. Hurd: I very much regret that a mistake was made in the information that I gave to the House. The number of British overseas citizens throughout the world is, as I suggested, probably about two million, but I was misinformed about the percentage who possess only that form of citizenship. The figure is probably something over 200,000, and not about 800,000. I apologise for having unwittingly misled the House by giving the latter figure.

WALES

Low-flying Aircraft

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department has any plans to carry out research into the effects of low-flying aircraft on livestock.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: There are no such plans.

Tourism

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated effect on the Welsh tourist industry of the drop in numbers of United States tourists to Wales during the last few weeks in financial terms.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not available. I am however, well aware of the reports of cancellations from North America not just to Wales but to the whole of the United Kingdom. Steps have been taken to reassure Americans that the United Kingdom is a safe place to visit.

GCSE (Representations)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations his Department has received concerning the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education examination in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Representations have been received from 18 Members of Parliament, three county councils, one local education authority, the Local Authorities Committee of the WJEC, the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association, two county groups of secondary headteachers, a county branch of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Woman Teachers, the governing bodies of 18 secondary schools, a federation of parent-teacher associations, 13 individual parent-teacher associations, nine heads of school departments, two teachers, three school associations, one school governor, the Welsh SDP conference and 146 individuals, all requesting postponement.

ENERGY

Oil Extraction

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy if there are any oilfields currently being exploited where there is a risk of premature abandonment or a likelihood of insufficient or discontinued investment leading to reduced levels of oil recovery.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: No well can be abandoned without the Secretary of State's consent. This consent will not be given so long as recovery remains economic and is not contrary to good oilfield practice. There must be a risk that a sustained period of low oil prices will bring forward the date at which production from some wells becomes uneconomic, but I have received no proposals to cease production for this reason and have no grounds at present for believing that planned ultimate recovery from currently producing fields will be affected by insufficient investment.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to ensure that adequate priority is given to the maximum attainable level of oil extraction from off shore fields now in the course of exploitation or development.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The Government's policy continues to be to achieve maximum economic recovery of petroleum reserves, subject to good oilfield practice. All development plans have to meet these criteria before they are approved; fields in production are monitored regularly to ensure production is in accordance with good oilfield practice.

Severn Barrage

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he received the report of the feasibility study into the proposed Severn barrage scheme; what information he has as to the proposed publication date; and if he will take steps to publicise the findings.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 12 May at column 333.

Atomic Reactors (Explosions)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the Government have contingency plans for using the armed services to assist in smothering an atomic reactor in the event of a nuclear explosion causing pollution of the atmosphere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Health and Safety Executive's booklet "Emergency Plans for Civil Nuclear Installations" outlines the flexible contingency plans which have been drawn up and regularly tested to respond to any emergency at a United Kingdom civil nuclear installation. The arrangements have been designed to be capable of extension in the remote possibility of a serious accident. In these circumstances the part that might best be played by all the resources of Government, including those of the armed services would be considered as necessary.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Welsh Courts

Mr. Wigley asked the Attorney-General which of the chief clerks to the county courts of Wales have sufficient command of the Welsh language to be able to conduct their business through the medium of that language.

The Attorney-General: The Chief Clerks of Carmathen, Haverford West, Llangefni, Porthmadog and Swansea County Courts are able to conduct the business of their courts in Welsh.

Mr. Wigley asked the Attorney-General what are the criteria used in appointing interpreters (Welsh/English) in the Welsh courts.

The Attorney-General: Interpreters are selected on the basis of tested ability to provide rapid and accurate simultaneous translation from and into Welsh and English with particular reference to the special requirements of legal proceedings.

Trials (Statistics)

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of persons tried, acquitted or convicted following trials *(a)* in which the evidence of a former accomplice was given on behalf of the Crown or *(b)* on the basis of their statements of admission made after inquiries based on the evidence of a former accomplice.

The Attorney-General: The information requested by the hon. Member is not centrally recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate expense to the taxpayer.

Thomas Quigley and Paul Kavanagh

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Attorney-General why, when deciding want charges to make against Thomas Quigley and Paul Kavanagh in relation to terrorist activities, he did not charge them with treason.

The Attorney-General: The charges preferred against Thomas Quigley and Paul Kavanagh were those which were considered most appropriate in the light of the known facts and the nature of the conduct alleged of them.

Terrorism

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Attorney-General if he will list all those who have been prosecuted for offences relating to terrorist incidents in Great Britain since 1983.

The Attorney-General: Prosecutions for offences arising out of terrorist incidents are not centrally recorded. However, I have arranged for the Director of Public Prosecutions to prepare a list of the main terrorist cases conducted by his Department since 1983 and will forward it to the hon. Member.

SCOTLAND

Homeless Persons

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will produce four tables of information relating to Scottish applications under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 for 1984-85 in a form similar to that published on pages 42-44 of "Scottish Housing Statistics 1984".

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out below. The figures are provisional and subject to change. The form of the tables reflects changes, effective from 1 April 1984, in the information collection system.

Table 1

Applicant households by status, whether accommodation provided and period of application

Status	*Period of application (year ending 31 March)*	*As assessed by local authority*		
		Number of applicants	*Number of intentionally homeless*	*Number for whom accommodation secured*
Homeless	1981	7,021	537	6,107
	1982	8,268	489	7,433
	1983	8,663	522	7,658
	1984	7,958	504	7,086
	1985	8,980	593	7,472
Potentially homeless	1981	2,443	341	1,651
	1982	1,987	279	1,274
	1983	2,080	352	1,293
	1984	2,276	274	1,445
	1985	3,078	292	2,008
Neither homeless nor potentially homeless	1981	1,782	—	766
	1982	1,677	—	619
	1983	1,519	—	513
	1984	1,499	—	426
	1985	1,672	—	711

Status	Period of application (year ending 31 March)	As assessed by local authority: Number of applicants	Number of intentionally homeless	Number for whom accommodation secured
Not stated or contact lost	1981	3,615	—	85
	1982	4,018	—	32
	1983	4,260	—	43
	1984	3,502	—	35
	1985	4,524	—	—
Total applications	1981	14,861	878	8,609
	1982	15,950	768	9,358
	1983	16,522	874	9,507
	1984	*15,245	778	8,992
	1985	18,254	885	10,191

* From recent information received, a number of returns are outstanding for 1984. The total number of applications for this period is estimated to be around 16,000.

Table 2

Applicant households by reason for loss of last accommodation and type of priority need
1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985

Reason for loss of last accommodation	Type of priority need*: Household with dependent children	Household member pregnant	Household member vulnerable because of: Old age	Physical disability	Mental illness	Other special reasons	Household homeless in emergency	Household not in priority need	Total: Number	Total: Percentage
Parents, friends or relatives no longer willing/able to accommodate	3,294	1,224	267	118	94	778	10	2,170	7,829	42·9
Dispute with spouse/cohabitee—violent	1,985	64	40	27	11	246	2	159	2,422	13·3
Dispute with spouse/cohabitee — non-violent	2,064	58	79	22	32	339	6	554	3,089	16·9
Court order	511	30	23	15	6	93	1	123	779	4·3
Loss of service tenancy	206	25	32	14	2	24	1	87	380	2·1
Action by landlord	321	79	57	19	4	28	2	135	621	3·4
Fire, flood, storm, etc	194	5	31	8	6	12	459	11	586	3·2
Discharged from institution	10	8	12	8	34	67	2	36	173	0·9
Lost accommodation in hostel/hotel	63	39	24	9	8	26	2	172	333	1·8
Gave up secure accommodation	420	43	45	13	6	47	1	137	678	3·7
Other	622	107	114	33	28	116	7	370	1,359	7·4
Total: Number	9,690	1,682	724	286	231	1,776	493	3,954	†18,249	100
Total: Percentage	53·1	9·2	4·0	1·6	1·3	9·7	2·7	21·7	100	

* Households may be in priority need for more than one reason. All reasons given are shown in the table.
† Excluding 5 valid cases.

Table 3

Applicant household by circumstances as assessed by the authority and type of accommodation secured
1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985

Circumstances as assessed by the authority	Type of accommodation secured: Permanent accommodation	Short stay accommodation only	None	Transferred to another authority	Total: Number	Total: Percentage
Priority homeless, unintentional	5,011	1,728	195	71	7,005	38·4
Priority homeless, intentional	238	141	193	21	593	3·2
Non-priority homeless	179	175	1,027	1	1,382	7·6
Priority potentially homeless, unintentional	1,498	88	114	34	1,734	9·5
Priority potentially homeless, intentional	123	24	141	4	292	1·6
Non-priority, potentially homeless	227	48	722	5	1,052	5·8
Neither homeless nor potentially homeless	672	39	955	6	1,672	9·2
Contact lost, etc	—	—	4,524	—	4,524	24·8
Total: Number	7,948	2,243	7,921	142	18,254	100·0
Total: Percentage	43·5	12·3	43·4	0·8	100·0	

Table 4

Summary of district returns
1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985

Area	Applicants: Number	Applicants: Per 1,000 households	Applications assessed as in priority groups: Number	Applications assessed as in priority groups: Number intentionally homeless	Number of applicants for whom permanent accommodation secured	Number of applicants for whom only short stay accommodation secured	Number of applicants in short stay accommodation on 31 March 1985
SCOTLAND	18,254	9·6	9,624	885	7,948	2,243	835

Area	Applicants		Applications assessed as in priority groups		Number of applicants for whom permanent accommodation secured	Number of applicants for whom only short stay accommodation secured	Number of applicants in short stay accommodation on 31 March 1985
	Number	Per 1,000 households	Number	Number intentionally homeless			
Borders	46	1·1	42	2	34	11	8
Berwickshire	8	1·1	7	—	6	1	2
Ettrick and Lauderdale	11	0·8	9	—	8	3	1
Roxburgh	27	1·9	26	2	20	7	5
Tweedale	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Central	2,174	21·7	1,858	43	477	1,257	30
Clackmannan	262	15·0	203	—	202	—	3
Falkirk	1,552	29·0	1,492	39	108	1,253	3
Stirling	360	12·4	163	4	167	4	24
Dumfries and Galloway	301	5·6	233	20	209	22	21
Annandale and Eskdale	58	4·3	36	3	26	5	1
Nithsdale	120	5·8	99	11	111	—	14
Stewartry	95	11·0	70	6	62	3	2
Wigtown	28	2·5	28	—	10	14	4
Fife	858	6·7	518	36	507	53	17
Dunfermline	316	6·8	272	8	240	16	12
Kirkcaldy	285	5·0	144	12	191	25	5
North East Fife	257	10·2	102	16	76	12	—
Grampian	972	5·2	521	66	432	100	18
City of Aberdeen	707	8·3	307	47	259	78	3
Banff and Buchan	23	0·8	20	3	19	—	—
Gordon	48	1·9	46	3	37	5	4
Kincardine and Deeside	21	1·3	21	—	21	—	—
Moray	173	5·7	127	13	96	17	11
Highland	92	1·3	61	4	63	9	17
Badenoch and Strathspey	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cathness	1	0·1	1	—	—	1	1
Inverness	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
Lochaber	58	8·3	33	3	42	2	2
Nairn	18	4·9	13	1	7	6	5
Ross and Cromarty	15	0·9	14	—	14	—	—
Skye and Lochalsh	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Sutherland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lothian	1,923	6·7	734	137	657	287	37
East Lothian	338	11·2	247	15	206	26	4
City of Edinburgh	1,146	6·5	319	55	373	175	15
Midlothian	223	7·8	63	45	10	24	12
West Lothian	216	4·3	105	22	68	62	6
Strathclyde	10,654	12·5	4,770	530	4,807	406	642
Argyll and Bute	245	10·1	126	24	96	28	1
Bearsden and Milngavie	57	4·1	27	6	38	2	4
Clydebank	9	6·5	4	—	4	—	9
Clydesdale	26	1·3	23	1	24	—	—
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	38	1·8	29	4	19	1	8
Cumnock and Doon Valley	59	3·8	49	4	18	32	9
Cunninghame	322	6·4	263	12	216	39	4
Dumbarton	45	1·6	8	—	13	2	37
East Kilbride	306	10·7	151	27	88	74	35
Eastwood	12	0·6	11	—	4	7	4
City of Glasgow	5,586	20·2	2,154	105	2,296	6	357
Hamilton	538	14·4	302	92	334	78	14
Inverclyde	333	9·3	171	16	144	32	17
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	68	2·3	30	6	26	3	12
Kyle and Carrick	710	16·7	294	63	208	32	37
Monklands	302	8·3	92	43	142	19	4
Motherwell	1,059	20·3	344	74	442	28	38
Renfrew	667	8·9	552	42	576	7	44
Strathkelvin	272	9·3	140	11	119	16	8
Tayside	1,118	7·3	807	39	716	57	16
Angus	211	5·9	129	9	69	45	4
City of Dundee	431	6·1	398	4	398	—	8
Perth and Kinross	476	10·4	280	26	249	12	4
Islands Councils	116	4·5	80	8	46	41	29

Area	Applicants		Applications assessed as in priority groups		Number of applicants for whom permanent accommodation secured	Number of applicants for whom only short stay accommodation secured	Number of applicants in short stay accommodation on 31 March 1985
	Number	Per 1,000 households	Number	Number intentionally homeless			
Orkney Islands	12	1·7	10	2	10	—	2
Shetland Islands	79	9·6	50	6	16	39	24
Western Islands	25	2·3	20	—	20	2	3

Forth Valley Health Board

Mr. Ewing asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the members of Forth Valley health board, the nominating organisation for each member and the place of residence of each member.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is as follows:

Forth Valley Health Board

Current membership	Nominated by	Place of residence
Mr. J. F. C. Armstrong	Confederation of British Industry; Scottish Conservative Party	Bridge of Allan
Mr. J. Cross	British Medical Association; Health Board	Larbert
Mr. A. B. Cruikshank	Health Board; Clackmannan District Council	Dollar
Mr. T. Downs	Clackmannan District Council	Alloa
Mr. L. Dunbar	Health Board; British Medical Association	Dunblane
Mrs. M. R. Ferguson	Scottish Health Visitors Association	Stirling
Dr. J. Furnell	British Psychological Society	Dollar
Mrs. J. Isbister	Secretary of State	Stirling
Mrs. M. C. Lambie	Central Regional Council	Falkirk
Mr. J. G. G. Lees	British Medical Association	Dunblane
Mr. W. D. M. Leithead	Confederation of British Industry	Larbert
Prof. P. McEwan	Scottish Trades Union Congress	Stirling
Mrs. W. J. A. MacFarlane	University of Stirling	Bridge of Allan
Mr. A. D. McNeill	British Medical Association	Stirling
Miss M. K. Ritchie	Health Board	Bo'ness
Mrs. R. M. Scott	Central Regional Council	Alva
Dr. W. J. Thomson	Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen	Falkirk
Mrs. J. S. Young	College of Speech Therapists; Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs; Scottish Conservative Party	Falkirk
Chairman		
Mr. L. J. M. Hynd OBE	Appointed by the Secretary of State	Stirling

THE ARTS

British Library

Mr. Hardy asked the Minister for the Arts how many books were loaned by the British Library to local authority library services in each of the last four years; and how many were loaned in the first quarter of 1986.

Mr. Luce: The table shows the number of books loaned by the British Library document supply centre to local authority libraries for the period requested:

	Number
1982	92,083
1983	101,529

	Number
1984	106,070
1985	118,285
1986*	31,666

* First quarter of

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out for each social security benefit the rules governing recipients who wish to take a holiday *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* abroad, stating in each case the period for which the benefit may continue to be drawn.

Mr. Major: Legislation does not specifically provide for holidays, but temporary absence from home is permitted as follows.

Benefit	*In the United Kingdom*	*Abroad*
Sickness Benefit and Invalidity Benefit	No restriction	Persons who have been incapacitated for at least 6 months may receive Benefit, during temporary absence, normally not exceeding three months.
Severe Disablement allowance	No restriction	
Maternity Allowance	No restriction	Not payable
Maternity Grant	No restriction	Not payable
Unemployment Benefit	Payable subject to continued availability for employment. Not normally more than two weeks	Not payable
Industrial Injuries Benefits	No restriction	No restriction
Attendance Allowance	No restriction	Not more than 26 continuous weeks
Invalid Care Allowance	No restriction if still caring for a person receiving Attendance Allowance for Constant Attendance Allowance, otherwise not more than four weeks	Not more than four weeks, except when absence is for purpose of caring for a person receiving Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance while absent. In such cases ICA is payable for the period of absence.
Mobility Allowance	No restriction	Not more than 26 weeks
Retirement Pension and Widows Pension	No restriction	No restriction
Christmas Bonus	I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 15 May at column *530*.	As for United Kingdom
Child Benefit and One Parent Benefit	No restriction	Not more than eight weeks
Child's Special Allowance and Guardian's Allowance	No restriction	Normally not more than eight weeks
Family Income Supplement	No restriction	No restriction
Supplementary Benefit	1. For recipients who are required to be available for work, the rules are the same as those for Unemployment Benefit. 2. For other recipients there is no restriction but benefit may be reviewed after 13 weeks.	1. Benefit is not payable for recipients who are required to be available for work. 2. For other recipients benefit is payable for not more than four weeks, except for some recipients claiming because of sickness or disability. These are entitled to benefit only if they have been sick or disabled for six months before departure or are going for the specific purpose of being treated for their illness or incapacity.
Housing Benefit	Standard Housing Benefit is payable for up to one year. Certificated Housing Benefit will cease when payment of the qualifying Supplementary Benefit ceases, and will normally be followed by Standard Housing Benefit. The claimant must intend to return and live in the home and must not let or sub-let it.	Housing Benefit is payable for up to one year under the same conditions as in the United Kingdom.

Note: There are provisions in European Community legislation which permit payment of benefits to EC nationals who go temporarily to another EC country, but as those are designed primarily for persons moving between member countries in connection with their work they would not normally apply to persons going on holiday. Similar provisions which exist in Reciprocal Agreements with a number of countries would again not normally apply to holiday absences.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy in relation to the limited list to ensure that general practioners may use brand name of a drug in lieu of the generic form when the manufacturer of that drug agrees to supply it to the National Health Service at the prevailing drug tariff price.

Mr. Hayhoe: I will consider this suggestion as part of the review to which I referred in my reply to my hon. Friend on 9 April at columns *121-22*.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of his expert advisory committees, the scope of their remits, together with an indication of those in respect of which the members are required to sign a declaration under the Official Secrets Acts.

Mr. Hayhoe: The names of my expert advisory committees which are classified as non-departmental public bodies are given on pages 36-38 of the MPO publication "Public Bodies 1985" published by HMSO ISBN 0 11 430008 9., a copy of which is available in the Library. A list of other advisory committees, not included in that publication, is given in the table. The Official Secrets Act applies to all official information whether or not a declaration has been signed. The Department does not normally call for a declaration to be made by members of advisory committees but it is generally the practice to make it clear, in letters appointing members to advisory committees, that the Official Secrets Act will apply.

Expert Advisory Committees not listed in "Public Bodies 1985"

1. Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens
2. Advisory Committee on Dialysis Equipment
3. Advisory Committee on Gene Modification Therapy
4. Central Manpower Committee (Medical and Dental)
5. Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation and the Environment
6. Committee on Research into the Behavioural Aspects of Smoking and Health
7. Community Medicine Inquiry
8. Dental Advisory Committee
9. Ethylene Oxide Working Party
10. Hospital Building Joint Liaison Committee
11. Information Advisory Group
12. Intermediate Treatment Fund
13. Leprosy Opinion Panel
14. Manpower Advisory Committee (Community Medicine)
15. Maternal Mortality Committee
16. Medical Advisory Committee
17. Microbiology Advisory Committee
18. Overseas Doctors—Study Group
19. Planning and Design Study Group for New Residential Accommodation for the Elderly
20. Project Control Study Group
21. Regional Secure Units Working Group
22. Review of HM(71)49 — Safe Handling of Foul and Infected Laundry
23. Study Group on the Review of Audit in the National Health Service
24. Technical Development Team for Demountable Storage
25. Transplant Advisory Panel
26. Working Groups for Pathology Laboratory Equipment
27. Working Group on the Safety of Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Imaging
28. Working Party on Containers and Closures for Sterile Fluids
29. Working Party on Project Cost Data Banks

The remaining bodies all fall within the ambit of the Chief Scientist's Office:

30. Building and Engineering Research and Development Committee
31. Children's Research Liaison Group (Care)
32. Children's Research Liaison Group (Health)
33. Elderly Research Liaison Group
34. Forensic Psychiatry Research Liaison Group
35. Homelessness and Addictions Research Liaison Group
36. Local Authority Social Services Research Liaison Group
37. Mental Handicap Research Liaison Group
38. Mental Illness Research Liaison Group
39. Nursing Research Liaison Group
40. Physical Disablement Research Liaison Group
41. Small Grants Committee
42. Social Security Research Policy Committee
43. Supply Research Liaison Group

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the number of applications for mobility allowance in each quarter of the last five years; and if he will give a percentage that are successful for each quarter;

(2) how many people applied for mobility allowance; and what percentage were successful in each quarter for the last five years.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people have had their mobility allowance withdrawn in each month since the House of Lords decision on a test case one year ago;

(2) if he will categorise the reasons for which mobility allowance has been withdrawn during the last year.

Mr. Newton: Mobility allowance is withdrawn only where the independent adjudicating authorities have reviewed their original decision to award the allowance and are satisfied that the decision was made in ignorance of, or was based on a mistake as to, a material fact; or that there has been a relevant change of the recipient's circumstances since the decision was given. The number of cases where a review has led to the withdrawal or a reduction in the period of an award of mobility allowance, since April 1985, is as follows. It is not possible to analyse these figures by reference to the reason for withdrawal.

	Number
1985	
April	16
May	29
June	18
July	14
August	11
September	15
October	21
November	22
December	12
1986	
January	19

	Number
February	18
March	15
April	26

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people currently being paid mobility allowance suffer from *(a)* deaf-blindness, *(b)* autism,*(c)* spasticity and *(d)* mental handicap;

(2) how many people are currently receiving mobility allowance; and if he will categorise them according to their disability.

Mr. Newton: The information as at 9 May is as follows. The analysis is not available in greater detail.

	Number
Neoplasms	8,332
Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases	2,919
Diseases of blood and blood forming organs	979
Diseases of the central nervous system	126,258
Diseases of the circulatory system	56,994
Diseases of the respiratory system	38,663
Diseases of bones and organs of movement	130,426
Congenital malformations	14,180
Amputations	7,259
Diseases of digestive systems, genito-urinary system; skin and cellular tissue	12,184
Total	398,194

In addition, there are 25,549 recipients who were formerly beneficiaries of the invalid vehicle scheme but the nature of their disability is not recorded.

Abortions

Mrs. Roe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the substance of the replies received to his letter of 11 December to proprietors of approved nursing homes and registered pregnancy advice bureaux concerning abortions; what specific reply was received from the Raleigh nursing home, Brixton hill and the Robert nursing home, Birmingham; and what action he proposes to take in the light of these responses.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply,* 15 May 1986, c. *531*]: Replies to this letter—which was sent by an official on 17 December—noted the statement in it of the circumstances in which an abortion can lawfully be carried out under the provisions of the Abortion Act 1967 and gave assurances that the contents of the letter would be brought to the attention of the staff concerned. In its response, the Raleigh nursing home assured the Department that it had always been their policy not to terminate a pregnancy solely on the grounds of unwanted fetal sex and stated that it had circulated copies of the letter to all its counselling staff, doctors and surgeons and had pointed out that such action is unlawful. The Robert nursing home stated that it was arranging for the letter to be brought to the attention of all doctors in the consulting rooms who counsel patients under the terms of the Abortion Act. These responses did not require further action, but I regard the allegations in the *Sunday Times* of 11 May as very serious and I have instructed officials to investigate them urgently so that any necessary action can be taken.

TRANSPORT

Pilotage

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received concerning the future of pilotage in British coastal waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I refer to my reply to the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) on 24 March, at column *365*. Since that date 38 representations about the future of pilotage have been made either to me or my noble Friend the Minister for shipping. The representations have included expressions both of support for our proposals for new legislation, and of opposition to them.

Soviet Shipping

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many Soviet *(a)* merchant ships, *(b)* fishing vessels and *(c)* cruise ships have visited British ports since 1980; and if he will list the names, tonnage, dates of visits and port visited, in respect of each ship.

Mr. Ridley: The total number of Soviet merchant ships and fishing vessels visiting United Kingdom ports since 1980 are as follows:

	Number
1980	1,143
1981	1,273
1982	1,233
1983	1,245
1984	1,492
1985	1,612

I shall write to my hon. Friend with details of calls made in individual ports. The other information sought in respect of each call is not available.

A5120 (Toddington)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions have taken place between officials of his Department and officials of the Bedfordshire county council regarding the additional traffic that will be generated on the A5120 through Toddington as a result of roadworks on the M1.

Mr. Ridley: I regret that roadworks on the M1 in July will require the closure of junction 11 for about nine weeks. Some of the traffic that would normally use junction 11 will be diverted to junction 12 and the A5120 will form part of the diversionary route. The Department has discussed these arrangements with officials of the Bedfordshire county council.

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he will reconsider his decision to recommend a pedestrian crossing on the A5120 in Toddington, in the light of the additional traffic now expected because of roadworks and diversions on the M1.

Mr. Ridley: I am now satisfied that a crossing can be justified and it will be installed before the M1 roadworks begin.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Aitken asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the advertisements placed by his Department

for the purposes of alerting people to the opportunity to petition on the Channel Tunnel Bill, stating the publication dates and the newspapers in which the advertisement appeared.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department placed advertisements alerting people to the opportunity to petition against the Channel Tunnel Bill in the following newspapers on the dates indicated:

Newspaper	*Date*
Daily Express	21 April
London Standard	21 April
The Times	21 April
Daily Mail	22 April
Daily Telegraph	22 April
Guardian	22 April
Sun	22 April
South Kent Newspapers	24 April
Kent & Sussex Courier Group	25 April
Kent Messenger Group*	25 April
South London Press	25 April
Surrey Mirror	25 April
News of the World	27 April
Sunday Times	27 April
Canterbury Times	28 April

* Except *Canterbury Times*.

Mr. Aitken asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many copies of his Department's leaflet "Channel Tunnel: How to Make Your Voice Heard" have been distributed in Kent; and on what dates the distribution took place.

Mr. David Mitchell: Four thousand seven hundred copies of the Department's leaflet "Channel Tunnel: How to Make Your Voice Heard" were sent to Kent local authorities, Members of Parliament, the Channel Tunnel Group's information centre in Folkestone and other interested bodies on 21 April. Since then the Department has distributed a further 13,000 copies to individuals and groups, many of them in Kent.

Mr. Aitken asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many copies of his Department's leaflet entitled "Channel Tunnel: How to Make Your Voice Heard" were printed.

Mr. David Mitchell: Twenty five thousand.

Mr. Aitken asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the publication date of his Department's leaflet entitled "Channel Tunnel: How to Make Your Voice Heard".

Mr. David Mitchell: 18 April.

ENVIRONMENT

Women's Aid Refuges

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government have any plans to collect and publish detailed information on the funding of women's aid refuges; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 13 May about the funding of women's aid refuges. We have no plans to collect and publish detailed information on such funding.

Dog licence

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now make a statement on the future of the dog licence.

Mrs. Rumbold: We will announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

Smith-type Housing

Mr. Gilroy Bevan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest state of negotiations with regard to owner-occupied Smith-type houses in Birmingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I announced on 19 December 1985 that the Government, recognising the problems faced by Smith home owners in Birmingham and elsewhere, and in the light of latest Building Research Establishment evidence, intended to designate Smith houses nationally under the housing defects legislation. That designation was not made straight away in order to give Birmingham city council and certain other authorities the opportunity to make local designations to deal with additional foundation defects. The Government have now made the national designation and eligible home owners are therefore entitled to assistance, either reinstatement grant or, in certain circumstances, repurchase at 95 per cent. of defect-free value. As I explained to my hon. Friend, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) when I met them on 15 May. We look to Birmingham, and other local authorities, to implement the legislation in a reasonable way. The council has indicated that it envisaged repurchase of the designated properties: I will wish to explore with it whether this is the right course of action, especially for those owners who have been looking forward to having their houses repaired with grant assistance under the legislation.

Urban Renewal (Wigan)

Mr. Sackville asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on proposals submitted to his urban housing renewal unit by the Wigan metropolitan borough council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am pleased to announce my favourable response to a proposal for a scheme in Wigan which the metropolitan borough council has worked up in close collaboration with my Department's urban housing renewal unit and the North West Regional Office.

The estate which will benefit from today's decision is the Millers lane estate in Wigan. This rundown and unpopular estate which has voids of 13 per cent., dates from the 1960s, and consists of 665 dwellings. One third of them are traditional low-rise houses; the remainder are one and two-bedroomed flats and family maisonettes above ground floor level.

The council intends to set up a neighbourhood housing office on the estate to provide responsive local management and a locally-based repairs team and to improve tenant involvement. I see this as a vital part of the package which should enable the council to sustain the improvements which we expect to see as a result of the other steps being taken, and am pleased to approve in principle a contribution of £75,000 from the urban programme. A key part of the package is a two-year

community refurbishment scheme to enable local unemployed people, funded jointly by my Department's urban programme and the Government's community programme, subject to consideration and support by the Manpower Services Commission's area board, to carry out improvements to the environment and communal areas on their own estate. Resources of the order of £1,964,280 will be involved includjng £906,566 of urban programme funding, which I am pleased to approve in principle.

I have also agreed to an additional capital allocation of £565,000 from UHRU's targeted housing investment programme resources in 1986-87, to enable the council to re-roof up to 37 blocks of three-storey flat-roofed and to change unsatisfactory heating systems.

This scheme is yet another example of the type of proposals being worked up through the close co-operation between a local authority, my Department's urban housing renewal unit and regional offices. I look forward to seeing these proposals being put into action for the benefit of the residents at Millers lane.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what account was taken by NIREX of drainage and water table problems of sites considered for nuclear dumping.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 15 May 1986, c. *550*]: I am informed that NIREX took account of all hydrogeological information available to it.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his review of the question of radioactive dose equivalents to critical groups will be completed before the geological exploration of near-surface disposal sites begins; and what implications it has for the design, siting and operation of nuclear dumps.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 15 May 1986 c. *550*]: No. Although a generic review of radioactive dose equivalents to critical groups from various disposal options was undertaken as part of the BPEO study, site specific assessments cannot be undertaken until NIREX has obtained the necessary geological data.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (Taxes and Duties Harmonisation)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the proposed harmonisation of indirect taxes and duties in connection with progress to a European Economic Community internal market; if it is envisaged that this process would involve the harmonisation of tax rates, value added tax exemptions and value added tax zero-rating; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The question how best to remove fiscal barriers to trade within the European Community is currently being studied by an ad hoc group of senior officials set up by the Council of Economic and Financial Ministers in January. They are considering both the Commission's proposals for completion of the internal market and possible alternatives which might achieve the same objective without harmonisation of indirect tax and duty rates. Decisions on what action may be necessary to complete the internal market will be taken in the light of the group's report.

Knitting Industry

Sir John Farr asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from firms in the knitting industry objecting to the new measures in regard to the collection of value added tax; and what assessment he has made of the implications of these new arrangements for the viability of the firms concerned.

Mr. Brooke: I have received one such representation, which referred to the default surcharge to be imposed on those persistently late with their VAT returns and payments. The VAT accounting arrangements, which have not been changed, permit for between one and four months before tax charged has to be remitted to Customs and Excise. Many traders derive a cash flow benefit from this. The Government are, however, conscious of the problems faced by firms whose cutomers are dilatory in paying their bills and are to publish "Notes for Guidance to Buyers and Sellers" later this month. These will emphasise that terms for payment should be agreed in advance and stress that payment should then be made within the agreed period.

Imported Gifts

Mr. Wheeler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the maximum value permitted for import of gifts free of excise was last reviewed; what information he has on the equivalent allowance in other European Community member states and the United States of America; and if he will review the current level.

Mr. Brooke: Common value limits (and quantitative limits for certain exercisable goods) apply throughout the Community. These were last reviewed in 1985 as a result of which the value limits on gifts imported from other member states were raised from £40 to £58 from 1 October 1985 and that on gifts imported from outside the Community will be raised from £20 to £27 from 1 July 1986. Information on equivalent limits in the United States of America is not readily available.

Mr. Wilfred Aspinwall

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, columns *260-61*, concerning correspondence of 4 December, 6 March and 11 April about Wilfred Aspinwall of the Managerial, Professional and Staff Liaison Group, if he will now provide a prompt reply.

Mr. MacGregor: I replied to my hon. Friend today.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Intervention Costs

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to his reply of 6 May, *Official Report*, column *94*, he will provide a breakdown of the figure of £42 million given as the total intervention storage and relate costs for beef and butter between the two commodities.

Mr. Jopling: Estimated costs are £25 million for beef and £17 million for butter.

Pest Infestation Research Laboratory

Mr. Watts asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the future of the Pest Infestation Research Laboratory in London Road, Slough.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Thames Barrier

Mr. Spearing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement concerning the condition of electrical control equipment of the Thames barrier and the extent to which it is currently restricted in its operation.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

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SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 97**

SESSION 1985–86

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There will, however, be headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one will find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions.*

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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